This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

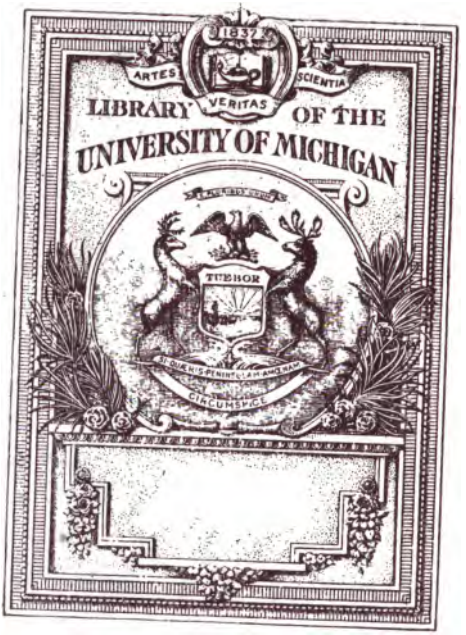
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
CIRCUMSPICE

a21
B1
50

BX
7233
.B81
1914

WITH OPEN MIND

JOHN WILLIAMS BRADSHAW

THE OPEN MIND

by

WILLIAMS BRADSHAW

THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON :: NEW YORK :: CHICAGO

JOHN WILLIAMS BRADSHAW

WITH OPEN MIND

by

JOHN WILLIAMS BRADSHAW

THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON :: NEW YORK :: CHICAGO

Copyright, 1914
by
The Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society

THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	ix
I. SHOW US THE FATHER	1
II. THE MIND OF CHRIST	15
III. THE MIND OF CHRIST AND THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES	31
IV. THE DIVINENESS OF THE NATURAL	49
V. THE DIVINE LIMITATIONS	65
VI. THE DIVINE CONSIDERATENESS	81
VII. LIGHT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS	93
VIII. EARTH HELPED THE WOMAN	109
IX. FEAR NOT	127
X. THE SECRET OF CONTENT	141

374282

PREFACE

THE sermons in this little book have been selected from material which was left by Dr. Bradshaw—with no thought of publication, or even reading by anyone save himself. He was so truly a prophet of God that many of his most effective sermons, which quickened his hearers and inspired their daily living, are not in form for general use through the printed page. He was no religious essayist, but a preacher of truth, of convictions reached in the busy life of the pastorate and the quiet, persistent, clear-minded research of the study, their utterance governed and shaped by his great sympathy for human need. His private record of written and extempore sermons gave clear evidence of the wide range of his thought and his thorough-going habits of study and work. The sermons presented here are only suggestive of Dr. Bradshaw's frank and helpful preaching; the permanent and full record has been written in the lives of those of us who called him Pastor and Friend.

Dr. Bradshaw was born at Crown Point, N. Y., July 7, 1849. He died of spinal sclerosis at Peoria, Ill., September 2, 1911. His college preparation was made at Middlebury College,

from which he graduated in 1869, with scholarship honors and election to Phi Beta Kappa. For two years he was in the employ of the United States Government at Washington, and then pursued theological studies at Chicago Seminary, where he received his degree in Divinity, and later the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. His pastorates were notable: at Batavia, Ill., for six years, at Rochester, Minn., for six years; and then three remarkable college pastorates, at Galesburg, Ill., for three years; at Ann Arbor, for twelve years; and the last ten years of his service, at Oberlin, Ohio, in the historic First Church, as a worthy successor of Finney and Brand.

W. F. Bohn.

Oberlin, September, 1913.

INTRODUCTION

JOHN WILLIAMS BRADSHAW was a preaching thinker who worked quietly at his high calling for nearly forty years with a mind steadily open to the Christian view of the world that is slowly being shaped by the processes of scientific investigation and reverent philosophical reflection. He sought for no conspicuous recognition in the periodicals or organization of the church. He rather went quietly on his way thinking deeply and preaching simply—so quietly and simply that not every one realized the deep reaches of his thought. He made no provision for literary recognition after he should pass away; his parishioners who read this volume will wonder why certain sermons they have heard do not appear here. The reason is that his greatest sermons were never written out and exist only in outlines. Through three of his pastorates, covering a period of twenty-five years, he was subjected to the exacting, stimulating demands of college communities—Galesburg, Ann Arbor, and Oberlin. His native mental alertness of mind, sincerity and sympathy had ample opportunity for exercise and development.

A strange feature of his successful career

was his fear that he had made a mistake in entering the ministry. He perhaps felt that he had been carried into it by the momentum of his ancestry, for his father was a minister and on his mother's side, in the Williams family, there were eight successive generations of ministers before him. Three of these remained each fifty years in his parish without change. This haunting fear that he had perhaps made a mistake in entering the ministry may have been one element of his power because it kept him from anything like ministerial professionalism in his thinking. He always came up to great religious problems with the non-professional attitude of an outsider. One naturally remembers him as a man rather than as a minister.

His outstanding characteristics as a man were his scientific spirit, his deep emotional nature and his strong, respectful sympathy.

He was a man of scientific spirit. Happily in our day this designation includes much that would have once been expressed only by the word "Christian," and because of such men as Dr. Bradshaw the word Christian now connotes some things that would have been once expressed only by the word "scientific." The first or second time I ever heard him speak he was addressing several hundred college students in the evening "Life Work Meeting" under the oaks on the shore of Lake Geneva, and was speaking to them of the trend toward a recognition of the spiritual that was evident

in physical research. The illustrations in his sermons were often drawn from the field of the natural sciences and especially from the department of physics.

He possessed the scientist's readiness to do the incidental drudgery of his profession. He was always ready to attend the necessary ecclesiastical meetings of his denomination. He appeared promptly at the beginning, stayed to the end, and performed any committee work assigned to him with a thoroughness not always found in men possessing in so marked a degree gifts usually thought to render their possessor superior to such work.

His scientific spirit appeared in his ability to recognize and carefully estimate evidence. The minister, unlike the lawyer, seldom finds his public utterances challenged on the spot by an alert opponent, and in consequence he sometimes becomes slovenly in his use of evidence. Dr. Bradshaw was always his own intellectual antagonist. He weighed evidence with the same exact scrutiny that is demanded in a physical laboratory.

His scientific spirit revealed itself still more fundamentally in the activity of his outreaching mind that went searching for facts in every quarter. He had what Dr. Doremus Scudder calls "the passion for reality." A sense of the divinity of facts constrained his whole nature. Professor Huxley's often quoted statement might have been made by him: "Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest man-

ner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing. I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind since I have resolved at all risks to do this." It was because of this spirit that, although his theological training ante-dated the period in which many present day theological problems first appeared in this country, he kept steadily abreast of modern thought. His mind was always on the lookout to see and recognize truth in whatever quarter it might make its appearance.

In combination with the keen intellectualism of his scientific spirit, Dr. Bradshaw possessed a deep emotional nature. He reached out after God with his heart as well as after truth with his intellect. If he had been less exacting and profound in his thinking, or had taken truth less seriously to heart, he would have suffered less than he did. He felt keenly at times the heavy burden of the mystery of being.

He was furthermore a man of strong, quick sympathy. It was always a gentleman's sympathy, a thoroughly respectful sympathy that came in abundance from the depths of a fine-grained nature. Every true pastor must of necessity experience a development of the capacity for sympathy, but a peculiar draft was made upon the sympathetic nature of Dr.

Bradshaw because of the fact that so many years of his life were spent in college communities. Those who have inner contact with college life know that college students do not generally find it the jolly, care-free period it is sometimes supposed to be. It has its serious and occasionally even its tragic side for it is a period when perplexing problems are faced and decisions of fundamental importance are made. It is generally the period in which a man settles upon his life work, transforms inherited religious opinions into personal convictions, and perhaps fights a fierce battle with temptation. Dr. Bradshaw's habits of thought and own personal religious experience fitted him to sympathize sincerely with those who were passing through this period of storm and stress. Horace Rose, who during his short life gave inspiration to thousands of North American college students, once told me that when he was Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association in Ann Arbor and sometimes had occasion to climb to the attic room of some student failing in his work, defeated in his battle with evil habit or with poverty, he more than once found Dr. Bradshaw by the boy's side bringing him good cheer and bearing his burden with him. His own consuming conscience, combined rather strangely with a spirit of buoyant good cheer, made him a saving power to many a student in desperate spiritual need.

The characteristics of Dr. Bradshaw's

preaching grew out of his characteristics as a man. His preaching had the elements of greatness in it without the impressive appearance of greatness at the moment.

It was great in its simplicity, in the unconscious, matter-of-fact way in which great ideas were presented. They had been wrought out in the struggle of his own soul and were brought to others with the simple enthusiasm and conviction of personal discovery. When clear conviction was, in the nature of the case, not possible his preaching was great in the honesty with which he recognized difficulties, grappled with them and welcomed a reasonable probability.

His preaching was great in the reach of its thought. It rested on a philosophical foundation. His sermons were not miscellaneous but had great connecting basic ideas running through them. He was quick to see and discuss all the practical phases of social, industrial, and political life both in the local community and in the nation, but he always saw them in the light of great principles. He had a well-thought-out philosophy of life.

His preaching was great in its constructive influence. He knew how to seize upon the constructive and not the destructive aspects of new ideas that were in process of displacing older views. His two sermons in this volume on "The Mind of Christ," and "The Mind of Christ and the Old Testament Scriptures" illustrate this. He had passed through such

struggles to win his own faith and had such strong human sympathy that he could never preach with any other purpose than to build up faith—but it had to be an honest faith.

It was always his personality that gave power to his preaching and at the last God used his personality in a way that no one had anticipated to strengthen the faith of those to whom he ministered. He finally passed over the verge of nervous prostration which had more than once appeared threateningly before him. He sank into settled melancholia, and after two years of wasting illness death released his tortured spirit.

The unconscious message of his life was constructive to the end because the lesson of these last two years was a most effective witness to immortality. It is simply impossible to suppose that such a life as he had lived could end forever in the misapprehensions that darkened his last months. If such a life could end forever in black despair we should be reduced to permanent intellectual and moral confusion. It must be that his clouded spirit came again to its proper self in the clear, quiet glory of God. He must have gone out to view the mystery of being from a point of greater vantage—the mystery of being with its deep undercurrents of feeling that flow through the individual and relate him to universal being, the mystery of being with its high purposes that struggle to keep a straight course in the life of the individ-

ual and bear him nearer to the heart at the center of the universe.

He has heard in clearer tones the great answer of Jesus Christ to the heart's long cry for God of which he speaks in the sermon on "Show Us the Father": "As each generation passes from the bright cloudless morning of youth to the burden and heat of the day and so on to the lengthening shadows, the cry of its heart, growing deeper and ever deeper, is the appeal of the desponding Philip, 'Lord, show us the Father.' Oh! to know the real heart of that inscrutable One, from whom we come, to whom we hasten. To that cry it is that Jesus gives answer: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. From henceforth ye know him and have seen him.' "

EDWARD I. BOSWORTH.

CHAPTER I

SHOW US THE FATHER

CHAPTER I

Show Us the Father

John 14: 8, 9a and 7b—*Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. From henceforth ye know him and have seen him.*

BECAUSE nineteen hundred years ago, of a humble mother in an obscure village of an insignificant province, a little babe was born, the great modern world with its multitudinous peoples, its vast and complicated interests, commercial, social, political, during one week in the year pauses for an instant in its whirlwind rush; listens for a moment for the voice at its heart; and as it surges forward again in its onward sweep, it is with an added light upon its face, an added tenderness in its spirit.

The question of greater importance to each human heart and to the world than all others, the question which gathers up into itself all welfare and all hope, is the question, "What is the nature of that Ultimate Reality upon which our being depends: whom for want of a better name we call God?"

An illumining truth, with far-reaching implications, which we are coming to apprehend in these recent days, is that the Incarnation of

God is not a solitary, unique event in the history of the ages. Rather that incarnation is the order of the universe. From the deistic conception of God apart from his world, viewing it from afar, controlling it by irruption from without so far as he controls it at all, the thought of our time is turning to the conception of the indwelling God; God within his world; himself at the heart of the universe; himself the fountain of that resident energy which, finding outlet in the various forms of force, effects and constitutes the ongoing of the world.

From the beginning, the heavens have been declaring the glory of God and the firmament showing his handiwork. Day after day utters speech; night after night proclaims knowledge of God. To the one who has eyes to perceive, the glory of each dawn, the splendor of each evening sky is a fresh, new word from the Eternal Living One who inhabits all things. Since the creation of the world, the invisible things of him are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made. Incarnation for revelation, indwelling in his universe for the purpose of expressing himself through it, this has been the procedure of the Eternal Mind from the beginning. And from the beginning, also, the revelation of God in attributes and character has been as fast and as full as the medium through which the revelation was made rendered practicable.

In and through the earth, formless and void,

chaotic, only the most limited and defective disclosure of the characteristics of personality was possible. But from that time forward the story of the universe has been this: the evolving of higher and higher media of self-revelation through the indwelling energy of God; and the more and more complete revelation of God as the media available made self-disclosure possible.

Through matter in its primary form, responding only to the operation of gravity and the molecular forces, the expression of the Eternal Mind was of necessity limited and defective. With the advent of crystallization there appears the hint of plan and a planner. In the appearance of life in its ascending stages, purpose far-reaching and glorious finds its voice. But it is only through, as well as to persons that personality can make declaration of itself. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.

It is through man alone, made in the image of his Creator, that the character of the Eternal One may hope for anything like adequate expression. In man a voice speaks, not himself. As man heeds that voice, permits it to guide him, he himself becomes a revelation, a reflection of him whose voice it is.

The purpose for man from the outset was that he should be the incarnate expression of deity. But for sin this purpose would have been realized. As man is docile, obedient to the heavenly voice, the revelation of the Holy One

to him and through him becomes clearer, more complete. As he rejects the voice within, becomes stubborn, intractable, the voice is silenced, the mind is darkened, the revelation in character is hindered. We speak, and rightly, of the prophets as inspired; holy men, moved of the Holy Spirit. Not always sufficiently considered, perhaps, is the fact that it was what they were, their spirit and life, which constituted God's chief revelation of himself to the men of their day. In Hosea, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and Daniel themselves, in the character which they exhibited under the stress of life it was that God made most ample disclosure of himself, rather than in the words they spoke or wrote.

To those who know him, no man can say more than he is. It is from the man himself that his word takes significance. Character, not speech, is the highest form of revelation. It is not even the teaching of Jesus, but Jesus himself, who is the effulgence of the Father's glory, the very impress of his substance. Forerunners of the Christ these great prophets were; not only as foretelling the coming of the perfect revelation, but as themselves anticipating that disclosure, even though inadequately; in their imperfect measure illustrating that incarnation—God revealing himself in a human life—whose completeness was to be.

And yet it was but an imperfect, inadequate expression of the divine character, which the life even of these best men made possible.

That they, like others, still suffered from the marring, limiting effects of sin, none appreciated more deeply than themselves. From the mirror of their personality but a distorted reflection of the face of God was possible. Not till the sinless should appear in human history could the age-long process culminate, and the incarnation of God for the revelation of himself attain its perfection.

And when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman. And this it was which woke in the heart of the angels the song which sounded above the hills of Bethlehem; that now at last in human history had one appeared, susceptible of perfectly receiving the divine impress and of reflecting God to the world. This it is which is signified by the virgin birth. A personality in whom the Spirit of the Eternal may have unrestricted habitation. A true Son, in whom there may be perfect reproduction of the Father's character. No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath interpreted him; hath imaged him forth. Men need no longer walk in darkness as to the character of the Creator. In Jesus is the light of life.

"I am in the Father and the Father in me," so he declared. "The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. From

henceforth ye know him and have seen him." And so lift up thy voice in song, O! heart of man. With glad, exultant soul echo back those strains of heavenly gladness. The dark cloud is shot through with light; the inscrutable, heart-torturing mystery has so much as this, at least, of solution, that back of it all is One, the light of the knowledge of whose glory is reflected to us in the face of Jesus Christ.

"So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!'
* * * *
"Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee!

". . . . . O Saul! it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

This is the great truth of the Christmas-tide, forever new, soul-kindling. In Jesus, God shows his heart to us.

Hear a parable. To the dwellers in a dark, shadowy subterranean cavern, with no access to the light of day, there was sent at last a mirror, which, stationed at the entrance to their abode and reflecting the beams of the sun, flooded their gloomy dwelling with radiance. And when the first astonishment of these troglodytes had passed, instead of using the light for their guidance and rejoicing in its beauty, they fell to discussing, and at last to wrangling over the constitution of the mirror, and the

question whether it was or was not of the same essence as the light which it reflected.

In the thought of the Christian world concerning the saying of Jesus, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," there has often been sad confusion of subject and predicate, with melancholy consequences resulting therefrom. The utterance has been treated as if it were an assertion concerning Jesus; when in truth it is a teaching concerning God.

It was in answer to the appeal, "Lord, show us the Father," that the words were spoken; and what they affirm is not something about Jesus but something about the Being whom we call God.

The problem of the person of Jesus is indeed one of profoundest import, the theme of most reverent study for the greatest minds. But the great first thing which men need to know is not what Jesus is in his essential being; but what that tremendous energy, which holds us in its grasp, which ushers us into life, which carries us irresistibly hither and thither through life, and which at length hurries us out of life, is in its character. The power behind, underneath my being, what is it? is He? This is what Jesus came to make known, what in his life he revealed. Except as related to this, the essential being of Jesus is for us of no possible significance. What Jesus was in spirit, character, life among men, *that* essentially God forever is in his heart toward us, his children.

The deepest reality of human experience is

the sense of need; need great, varied, insatiable. The need of that which ministers to the body: food, raiment, healing. The need of that which ministers to the mind: truth, illumination. The need of that which ministers to the spirit: pardon, victory, comfort, hope.

First of all, to this great need of his own day, Jesus came, the incarnation of compassion and of ministration. He was moved with compassion toward the hungering multitudes, and fed them. He was moved with compassion toward the leper, diseased and outcast; and he put forth his hand, touched him and made him clean. He was moved with compassion toward the blind men and gave them sight. He had compassion on the people fainting, scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd, needing and destitute of guidance, and he taught them many things. He was moved with compassion on the poor widow of Nain, and by his death-conquering touch he restored to her her only son, the sole stay of her declining years.

To the sin-stained and self-condemned Jesus was the incarnation of forgiveness and saving power. The sick of the palsy found new life in the words, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The woman who had been a sinner, as she bathed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, heard from his lips the comforting assurance, "Daughter, thy sins be forgiven. Go in peace." To the woman left alone by her conscience-smitten accusers, yet awaiting the stern voice of judgment, there

came that word so unexpected, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, sin no more." In the heart of the penitent publican a new life sprang up as there fell upon his ears the declaration, "To-day is salvation come to this house; forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." The fatherly compassion and forgiveness which Jesus could not illustrate; since no son was his to wander into the far country and to turn again penitent to the forsaken home, he embodied in that story of the prodigal boy, the pearl of the parables.

Yet again to the grief-stricken, despairing heart of the world Jesus was the incarnation of consolation and sustainment. In him the weary and heavy-laden found rest unto their souls, the great sorrow of the world found sympathy and hope. He entered the home of Jairus where the little maid lay dead, and lamentation was turned into rejoicing. He touched the bier at the city gates, and the heart-broken mother lived again. To the stricken household at Bethany he brought the sustainment of his own divine sympathy, and at his word the great bereavement gave place to the joy inexpressible, as from the sepulcher Lazarus came forth alive once more. And over all this which Jesus was in those "years which breathed beneath the Syrian blue" is written, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Above the measureless need of the world broods the infinite compassion of the heart of the Eternal. To him he bids it to look that it

may be satisfied. As under the touch of Jesus the five loaves and two fishes were sufficient to satisfy the hunger of the thousands, so the meager, barren commonplace of life as it seems to us, under the blessing of the divine Sustainer becomes transformed into the true food of our being, suited to the development, adequate to the satisfaction of the fathomless spirit of man. In the words of Jesus it is the voice of God that speaks, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Close to all the sinfulness, the self-condemnation and the moral helplessness of the world presses the All-merciful, with his heart of infinite pity and forgiving grace; with the cleansing, restoring, victory-giving aid of his all-conquering Spirit. In the perpetual self-sacrifice of the ever-living, ever-loving One, the sin of the world has its expiation. In the mighty restoring energy of the redeeming God is help for the most helpless to gain the victory over evil, and to attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Within the embrace of fathomless love all the sorrows of the world are enfolded. Under the germinating life-giving warmth of that love, the sharpest sorrows of those who will entrust themselves to it are metamorphosed into the germs of everlasting joy, and what we call death becomes the gateway of endless abounding life. Over the black night of the world's bereavement there broods divine sympathy,

and a love, which is both love and power, shall bring that night to an end in the dawn of the day which knows no sunset.

As each generation passes from the bright cloudless morning of youth to the burden and heat of the day and so on to the lengthening shadows, the cry of its heart, growing deeper and ever deeper, is the appeal of the desponding Philip, "Lord, show us the Father." Oh! to know the real heart of that inscrutable One, from whom we come, to whom we hasten. To that cry it is that Jesus gives answer: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. From henceforth ye know him and have seen him."

"I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet
In lane, highway, or open street:

That he and we and all men move
Under a canopy of love
As broad as the blue vault above:

That doubt and trouble, fear and pain
And anguish, all are shadows vain,
That death itself shall not remain:

That weary deserts we may tread
A dreary labyrinth may thread,
Through dark ways underground be led;

Yet if we will our Guide obey,
The dreariest path, the darkest way
Shall issue out in heavenly day,

And we, on divers shores now cast,
Shall meet, our perilous voyage past,
All in our Father's house at last."

CHAPTER II

THE MIND OF CHRIST

CHAPTER II

The Mind of Christ

I Corinthians, 2: 16—*We have the mind of Christ.*

A MOST significant affirmation. Paul is speaking of ability to perceive spiritual things; the things which pertain to God. The merely intellectual man, he declares, cannot understand spiritual things; because they are understood through spiritual insight. The man with spiritual insight perceives spiritual things and is able to judge concerning them.

Supreme among seers of things spiritual—the things pertaining to God—stands Jesus. "The mind of Christ" to which Paul refers is that perception of things as they are which Jesus possessed, in the exercise of which he was able to apprehend for himself, and to interpret to us, the things of God.

The mind of Christ, then, is the supreme discoverer and revealer of what is actual in the realm of the spirit. All other seers of things spiritual have perceived obscurely, partially, in the dimness of twilight. Jesus saw clearly, proportionately, as in the light of noon. The mind of Christ, therefore, becomes the standard of reality, by reference to which the conceptions

and interpretations of all other persons are to be estimated, their accuracy and value determined.

Jesus saw things as they are. In so far as the reports of other men concerning things spiritual coincide with his, they are to be accepted. In so far as they differ from his, they are to be revised so as to accord with his. In the case of any question concerning things ethical and spiritual the inquiry to be raised is "How did it or would it look to Jesus?" "How would he judge of it?" If we can obtain answer to that question, we have reached a final conclusion.

This is the assumption of St. Paul; it is the essentially Christian assumption: that Jesus is indeed the light of the world; that he saw things spiritual as they really are; and that his utterance concerning them may confidently be accepted as the final authority.

It was the mind of Christ which gave us those great fundamental conceptions which underlie the Christian idea of the universe. The universal fatherhood of God in all its scope and blessed meaning; the divine worth of man, his relations to God and the universe; and the inconceivably glorious capabilities with which he is endowed; the true law of conduct, fulfilled in love to God and one another; these things the mind of Christ first clearly perceived, he grasped them for himself, and then he gave his conceptions to the world.

The claim of Jesus himself to perfect and ac-

curate perception in these things of the spirit, and to final authority in his utterances concerning them—the authority of one who sees—is clear and explicit. He is sure that he is right in his conception of God, as no one before him had been. He says, "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him." At a later day, in prayer, he says, "I have manifested thy name (thy character) unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world."

The author of the Fourth Gospel makes similar claim for the final authority of the mind of Christ, when he writes, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (hath interpreted) him."

And this claim of finality for the mind of Christ the experience and insight of nineteen centuries has vindicated. Nothing has come to light which discredits the supremacy of Jesus in the realm of spiritual insight. Widely as men may differ in their opinions as to his person, they are agreed in this, that in his conceptions of things spiritual he is the leader of the ages. Higher has the human thought not yet reached.

The keener the discernment, the more profound the spiritual insight of men, the more unhesitating have they been in their assent to the correctness of his perception. They are the most ready to concede his leadership in the realm of spiritual discernment. Through the

mind of Christ and its disclosures, the marvellous ethical and spiritual advance of the Christian generations has been made, and after nineteen centuries the world still follows him from afar.

Every new apprehension of things spiritual, each step toward a more adequate understanding of the teachings of Jesus, but serves to make more manifest how far in advance of all other men of spiritual insight he was and is.

In this mind of Christ, his clear perception of spiritual things, is the warrant for that note of assurance—of authority—with which Jesus spoke. He declares, "We speak the things which we do know, and testify to that which we have seen." "I speak the things which I have seen with my Father."

In the exercise of that authority, Jesus did not hesitate to set aside the time-honored traditions of his people, and to reject as of no warrant usages which were regarded as sacred. Established Sabbath regulations, rules and customs concerning fasting, he ignored in practice and condemned in principle. He assumed the prerogative to pass judgment upon the provisions of the older law, pronouncing some of them obsolete and others unsound in root idea. The whole body of Levitical regulations concerning things clean and unclean he set aside as of no binding force, and rejected the entire theory of ceremonial defilement. He pronounced the Mosaic law of divorce inconsistent with the mind of God concerning the family.

His oft-repeated form of expression was, Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, so and so: but I say unto you something quite different. These provisions of the past are in accord with what men saw in the twilight glimmerings of early dawn. But now the sun is up. These crudities must give way to clearer conceptions: to precepts and principles in closer accord with reality.

No less positive and plain is the claim which the Apostle Paul makes for the supremacy of the mind of Christ. By reference to the consciousness of Jesus the permanent worth of institutions, the validity of utterances out of the past is to be determined. It is the final standard. Whatever is inconsistent with it is to be laid aside, however venerable, however highly esteemed. This principle of the supremacy of the mind of Jesus, Paul himself had accepted when he abandoned the whole Jewish system as a thing temporary and outworn. The struggle through which he passed, which reached its decision on the Damascus road, was precisely at this point. Should he accept the mind of Christ as to God, his Messiah, the Jewish people and law, and God's purpose with reference to them, or should he stand by the faith of his fathers concerning these things? In coming to the discipleship of Jesus, Paul accepted for himself the mind of Christ as the final authority concerning the entire spiritual and religious realm. He recognized in that mind the standard to which all things are to be brought for

measurement: customs and institutions, heathen or Hebrew, law and literature, Jewish or Gentile. With full consciousness of what he was doing he fully accepted the superseding of all such teachings or institutions of the older faith as were inconsistent with the mind of Christ.

Note now the affirmation of Paul to the Corinthian disciples—That mind of Christ we have. In the possession of it we are able to discern and to pass judgment upon things which pertain to the spiritual life. "But he that is spiritual discerneth (judgeth) all things; for we have the mind of Christ."

First, in the teachings of Jesus we have his mind disclosed. In those conceptions of God, his character and purposes; of man, his possibilities and destiny; which came to light through the words of Christ, we are in possession of his mind, his thought, concerning these things. But furthermore, the truth which Paul is emphasizing in the connection in which the text occurs is that, as we become true followers of Jesus, as we let him rule in our lives and open ourselves to the leadings of his spirit, we ourselves come to possess his mind, his power of perceiving and judging of spiritual things. We see as he saw. We come around to his point of view. We are able to look through his eyes, and so we share his ability to discern the truth, and to estimate the value of conceptions offered for our acceptance, of courses we are asked to pursue.

A very wonderful endowment this is that the apostle claims for all true disciples of Jesus. By reason of its possession we do not need to refer things ethical, whether courses to be pursued or conceptions to be entertained, to any external rule or law, in order to determine their moral and spiritual value. Letting the Spirit of God lead us, we have within ourselves a standard to which all things may be referred for estimation. We have a discerning mind, the mind of Christ; and in its decisions we may confidently rest. What a sense of freedom the grasp of this truth gives us. The freedom Paul has in mind when he says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Now no great truth is without its implications. No great gift from God is without its use. What is implied in the possession by us of this endowment: "the mind of Christ"? What is the use to which this gift is to be applied? For answer we are to look to the use which Jesus himself made of this mind of his, this perception of spiritual values which he possessed.

First of all in the vision of God it gave him, he found life and gladness and liberty; the inspiration to the life which he lived. Furthermore, in the exercise of the mind of Christ, he estimated the past, the religious past of his people. He passed judgment upon its conceptions, its writings, its institutions. Some he confirmed; others he superseded. Some he pronounced partial; others he regarded as sub-

stantially complete; some temporary, others permanent; some crude, immature; others of enduring worth. In some he saw true glimpses of God, his Father; in others unworthy, unilluminated conceptions of the Father of Lights.

In the exercise of that same mind of Christ, the Apostle Paul pursued precisely the same course. That long struggle with Judaism in the Christian church, which contributes the tragic element to his career, the echoes of which may be heard throughout his letters to the Galatian and Corinthian Christians, was precisely at this point. Shall the mind of Christ be final—its deliverances accepted—with the abandonment of whatever is inconsistent with this mind, in the ancient institutions, writings or anywhere else? To this question the life and conflicts of the great apostle constituted one ringing affirmative. That is the significance of the third chapter of Second Corinthians. The Old Covenant with its appurtenances was glorious; but it was primitive, partial, defective, inadequate, and therefore transient—to pass away; its greatest glory attained in its giving place to that new life with God to which Jesus, through the mind of Christ, had introduced his disciples.

Here, then, we have answer to our question "to what use shall the mind of Christ which we possess be applied?" To the same use which was made of it by Christ and his great apostle. In the exercise of it we are to estimate whatever pertains to things ethical and spiritual, whether handed down from the past, emerging

now for the first time for judgment, or to come to light in the future.

The mind of Christ is ours; a precious treasure, the guaranty of glorious liberty; but also a sacred trust to be faithfully, fearlessly employed to the glory of God and in the service of man.

Looking back over the history of the church, it becomes manifest that the disciples of Jesus Christ have not always appreciated their high privilege and responsibility. They have failed fully to claim and to exercise that rich prerogative which was purchased for them even at the cost of the life of their Lord. Abstractly, theoretically, the church has asserted its possession of the mind of Christ, with the authority pertaining to it. But the practice of Christian people has too often been inconsistent with this.

Repeatedly, one might almost say habitually, the followers of Jesus have sacrificed the mind of Christ to conceptions wholly inconsistent with that mind, because they have chanced to find these conceptions embodied in the ancient writings of the Hebrew people. There are lurking in the minds of Christian people all over the world today dishonorable thoughts of God, which are utterly foreign to the mind of Christ. They persist for no other reason than that some descendant of Abraham, groping in the gray twilight of early day, gave utterance to these conceptions, and that utterance found place in the body of Hebrew literature. Instead of laying such conceptions aside as super-

seded by Christ, the body of Christian people has too often accepted the gropings of the half-blind as the true measure of spiritual realities, and has cramped and mutilated the glorious conceptions of Jesus into conformity with these notions of a far-off age of darkness.

The mind of Christ concerning God is that He is holy love; measureless, inexhaustible love; impartial love; making his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good and sending rain upon the just and upon the unjust; the gracious, loving, compassionate Father of all men.

When from listening to these words of Jesus, Christian people have turned back to read in the Old Testament the command, "When Jehovah, thy God, delivereth a city into thy hand, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women and the little ones and the cattle shalt thou take for a spoil unto thyself," they have imagined that they must distort Christ's conception of the loving God so as to make it include the characteristics of a deity who could give command that such atrocities and immoralities be committed.

But God is the same always. He was the same in spirit and character two thousand years before Christ that he was when Jesus lived and spoke, and the spirit which breathed in Jesus when he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me" could never have commanded that baby boys be mercilessly put to the sword. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not

an infinite Herod. Either Jesus or this Old Testament writer was in error. If the ancient conception is correct, then Jesus was at fault. There is no such God of love as he proclaimed. If Jesus is correct, the earlier writer was mistaken. He attributed to God, in the dim twilight and clouded vision of the beginnings of spiritual perception, characteristics which, in the light of the noonday sun, are seen not to belong to God.

Again we read in these ancient writings the prayer of a man concerning the person who had wronged him. "Let his prayer be turned into sin. Let his days be few. Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. Let his children be vagabonds and beg, and let them seek their bread out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath. Let there be none to extend kindness to him, neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children." And from this we turn to the vision of one crowned with thorns, his hands and feet pierced with nails which hold him to the cross, while from his lips there fall the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and it becomes very evident that the revengeful supplication of the psalmist was not prompted by the spirit which was made manifest to the world in Jesus Christ.

Instead, it was inspired by that very natural human resentment, which we have no difficulty in understanding, and which that Spirit of God who was doubtless moving upon the heart of this

suffering man, had not yet succeeded in wholly overcoming. The writer of the 109th Psalm had not yet come to the mind of Christ. But we have the mind of Christ. As disciples of Jesus, not only are we at liberty, for our own comfort and inspiration, to use that mind as the standard by which to measure conceptions past or present concerning God and spiritual things, —we are under obligation to do this,—for the honor of God and for the enlightenment and consolation of his children. In its hesitation to do this faithfully, fearlessly, the church is exposing itself to very great dangers.

First to the danger of dishonoring God, by clinging to and inculcating conceptions of the Eternal Goodness, which, however excusable they may have been in the case of men groping for light, become defamatory when fathered by those who have the clear teaching of Jesus.

Again, by hesitating to commit herself without reservation to the mind of Christ, the church is in danger of doing that very thing for which we condemn the Jewish people of Christ's day; that is, of rejecting her Lord through slavish adherence to a transcended faith.

A third danger which threatens the organized body of Christian believers is that of seeing, as the Jewish people saw, many of her most promising children following the mind of Christ away from the church, because of her failure to make that mind her own standard of belief and teaching. For the mind of Christ is

abroad in the world. His conceptions of God and His character, of man, and of what constitutes right living are in the possession of every one. The church herself has put them there. Theoretically they are the accepted standards of what it is right to think concerning God and conduct, even in the case of those who do not conform to these standards in their own lives; and no institution need hope to hold the mind and heart of the future, which proposes for acceptance anything less worthy and ennobling than the deliverances of the mind of Christ.

The alternative which faces the church today is, "Shall we revise earlier conceptions, wherever found, to accord with the mind of Christ, or shall we abandon the mind of Christ as authoritative?"

Surely it is needless to say that this is no plea for destructive radicalism. I am giving no expression to the spirit which denies, but to that which most positively affirms. Here is denial of nothing save that which itself denies the glorious affirmations of Jesus.

The word of this hour is simply the summons to those who count themselves disciples, learners of Jesus Christ, to accept the mind of their Lord as their criterion of things spiritual, and to rejoice that they are permitted so to do; that they no longer imagine themselves held in bondage to conceptions which they are unable to reconcile with the best instincts of their own souls; that they neither attempt to accept these

in fancied obligation to the command of God, nor imagine themselves called on to defend them against the criticism of those illumined by the mind of Christ.

The mind of Christ is ours. It is ours also to affirm the mind of Christ, to rejoice in it, and be free.

CHAPTER III

THE MIND OF CHRIST AND THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

CHAPTER III

The Mind of Christ and the Old Testament Scriptures

Mark 9: 7—*And there came a cloud overshadowing them: and there came a voice out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him."*

IT was the mind of Christ as the trustworthy authority in the realm of religion, the light which sets before us in clear vision the things of the spirit, which we considered in the last chapter.

The subject is one upon which we cannot reflect too frequently, too earnestly or with too great gladness; and it is to some of the significant implications of this great fact that I would direct your attention.

In the mind of Christ we have light, clear, abundant to guide us in all things which pertain to the spiritual, religious life,—our relation to God. When he has spoken our hearts can rest. Upon Jesus' conception of the character of God, of his relations to us and his disposition toward us we may confidently rely. For he knew. It was as the Son who abides in the bosom of the Father that he spoke. His conception of God's thoughts concerning us, of God's purposes with reference to us, we may accept

with full assurance. In his teaching concerning the spirit, the conduct, the life which are acceptable to God we may place implicit confidence.

He perceived clearly, perfectly, where the best of other men saw in partial, clouded vision. Their conceptions we are warranted in accepting for our guidance and comfort in so far as they are in accord with his. In so far as differences exist it is to Jesus we look as the final, trustworthy authority. For us, who are disciples of Jesus, there is, of course, no question at this point.

If, however, any assurance as to the correctness of this position were needed, we might certainly find it in those words with which we began, spoken on the Mount of Transfiguration at that moment when the divineness of the personality of Jesus shone forth with clearest effulgence, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him."

Those words of authentication have been accepted. Jesus has been heard. His teachings have been received into the thought and heart of the world. His conceptions concerning the character of God and his disposition toward men are the conceptions universally accepted by men who believe in a personal God at all. And these conceptions are common property. They have molded the thought of the world into conformity with themselves. So largely is this the case that the standards by which even men avowedly non-Christian measure things which pertain to religion and the spiritual life

are the Christian standards, the standards of the mind of Christ.

Now the prevalence of this influence of the mind of Christ upon the thought, both of the church and of society in general, is producing significant results. To one of these I would direct your thought.

The prevalence and insistence of the mind of Christ within the circle of the world's thought is, at the present day, forcing a procedure which is sometimes attributed to other causes. It is compelling a revision of the conception which we have entertained concerning the nature of the Old Testament writings.

Now it is needless to say, and yet it cannot be said too positively, that this collection of writings, which we call the Old Testament, is of inestimable value. They are the record and the product of the highest spiritual experiences of the race before the time of Christ. In them holiest souls have portrayed those visions of God which had been vouchsafed to them; have poured forth their emotions of penitence and trust and love and gratitude and holy aspiration in words and imagery which to this day constitute the most perfect medium of expression which we can find for the deepest experiences of our lives. Here great-visioned seers have recorded those eternal truths of the spiritual realm which, through divine illumination, they have been enabled to apprehend.

In these writings may be traced the movement of that increasing, progressive revelation

of himself and of men's perception of that revelation which God made to the people of Israel and through Israel to the world. Here, no less truly, is to be found the revelation of men; of their dullness of spiritual apprehension which so limited the disclosure God was seeking to make of himself to them. Here are photographed the crude, unworthy, calumnious conceptions of God and his character which possessed the minds of men, and which with so great difficulty God was able to displace with something worthier of himself. And here we may trace the process by which this displacement was effected, and men progressed to higher and worthier thoughts of the Eternal, until they were capable of receiving that glorious disclosure of himself which in the fullness of time God made in the person of Jesus Christ.

It would be difficult to employ language too strong in the attempt to express the worth to the world of these writings of the Hebrew people. The words of the free critic, Edmund Scherer* are none too emphatic: "The Bible will ever be the book of power, the marvellous book, the book above all others. It will ever be the light of the mind and the bread of the soul. Neither the superstitions of some nor the irreligious negations of others have been able to do it harm. If there is anything certain in the world, it is that the destinies of the Bible are linked with the destinies of holiness on earth."

But while all this is true and cannot be

*(King: "Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life," p. 222.)

affirmed too emphatically, it is also true that there is a widely accepted conception of the nature of these writings which, through the influence of the mind of Christ, is destined to be largely modified. That theory is that the Old Testament writings constitute a body of divine oracles, shaped directly by the mind of God and in every particular the expression of that mind, of equal authority and of equal ethical and spiritual value in all its parts, so that any utterance contained in this collection of writings is to be accepted as the infallible expression of the mind of God, and all utterances and conceptions are to be placed upon a par as equally true to the thought and character of God.

Now concerning this conception it is to be noted first of all that the Scriptures nowhere lay claim to any such character. Furthermore, it is certain beyond question that those by whom this body of thirty-nine writings—extending in their production over a period of from one thousand to fifteen hundred years perhaps—was gathered into a single volume, entertained no such view with reference to them. On the contrary, the difference in relative value between the different writings was sharply insisted on, and they were classified accordingly; some of them being long refused admission into the canon, because of their supposed inferiority.

Nor does the examination of the writings themselves seem to afford warrant for such an estimate of them as that we are considering. On the contrary, the impression received from

the examination of the collection as a whole is that here we have what is in the truest sense a nation's literature; the manifold expression of a nation's life, uttered in story, in song, in oratory, in fiction, in proverb. Instead of being a collection of oracles, the Old Testament more closely resembles a kinetograph, a moving picture of the life of Israel. As we look upon it we see events taking place; individuals and groups of people acting, and consequences following upon such action. We see men learning the lesson of these consequences—the consequences of sin and of righteousness, of faith and of unbelief; of loyalty to God and of disobedience to him—and we hear them uttering the truth they have learned for the instruction and guidance of others. We see these utterances taking effect in the further shaping of conduct and character. We perceive the action and interaction of all these influences in a nation's life, resulting in changing conceptions of God, from those that are primitive, defective, unethical, to those higher, more spiritual, more worthy; as God succeeds by means of the experiences through which he leads men in getting himself better understood, and through this better understanding of himself brings powerful influences to bear upon men to be better men. And, inextricably interwoven with all this, we find the utterances in poetry, prophecy, proverb or parable, which were the outgrowth of the experiences through which God was leading men, and we see these utterances of

prophet, poet, wise man or seer again reacting upon the life of the people to enlighten and elevate it.

All this resembles nothing so much as a biograph—a picture of life. Here we have events, the interpretation of those events for ethical purposes, the reaction both of the events and their interpretation upon the mind and character of the people, and the expression in literary form of the effect of such reaction.

In and through all this, by means of it, we perceive a gradually advancing revelation of God—of his mind and character and purposes —and a corresponding gradually advancing spiritual perception on the part of the people, an elevation of ethical and religious standards, and a broadening and deepening of spiritual life and spiritual influence in the life of the nation.

Again let it be said all this is of value inestimable. We cannot be too grateful for the revelation God made of himself in the life of the Hebrew people, or for the record of that revelation which we call our Bible. But this record is by no means of equal value in all its parts as an accurate and worthy revelation of the character of God or of the spirit and life which God approves in men. The various parts are of distinctly *unequal* value.

The defective, unethical conceptions of God which shaped the conduct and character of men in the days of the Judges are not to be placed on a par with those visions of the divine love

which fill the pages of Hosea with pathos, or with those conceptions of the divine majesty which speak to us in the lofty strains of Isaiah. The earlier and later conceptions are not equally true to God; and it is not only our privilege, it is our duty to discard the earlier in so far as they are inconsistent with the highest conception of the greatest soul; and all, highest and lowest, included in the writings of the ancient Covenant, are to be brought for estimation to the mind of Christ.

There came a cloud overshadowing them, and out of the cloud a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him."

As illustrating what is implied in thus summoning these conceptions of the older time to the mind of Christ for measurement, let us study for a few moments an incident from the Old Testament—the story of David's bringing of the sacred ark from the house of Abinadab to place it in Jerusalem. According to the narrative, the ark had been placed upon a cart drawn by oxen and "When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah (one of the sons of Abinadab) put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled (or, as the margin reads, 'threw it down'). And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error: and there he died by the ark of God."

I think no one of us reads this narrative without feeling something of a shock. We instinctively ask, "Can it be that this is altogether

accurate?" And that which leads us to raise the question is the mind of Christ. That is to say, it is because of the conception of God which Jesus has given us that we are impelled to inquire whether there must not be some mistake. The devil worshipper of Africa, the Hindu worshipper of Siva, who believes in a cruel deity, would raise no question concerning the occurrence. To him nothing here is inconsistent with the character of his deity. But because of what we have come to believe concerning God through the teaching of Jesus, we cannot repress the feeling that there must be a mistake somewhere. And under the warrant of the conception of God as the loving Father of all men we feel justified in scrutinizing the account, to see whether possibly some qualifying light may be thrown upon it.

We discover that this incident, like the greater part of Old Testament narrative, is not pure history, as we understand it,—the simple recording of events. It is history used for the impression of some lesson. The narrative contains both the record of the event and the writer's interpretation of the event. Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady the ark and he died. That was the event. The interpretation of the event by the writer was that God struck him dead because he touched the ark, to touch which was forbidden by the Levitical law. Now the event in this case we do not feel impelled to question. Such events take place. Instantaneous death is not unfamiliar. A short time

since, a minister of the Gospel fell dead while preaching. The event we do not question. It is the writer's interpretation of the event that gives us pause; and the question we are driven to ask, and we ask it earnestly, is this: "Is the writer's conception of God and of his disposition towards men consistent with that which Jesus has given us?"

In asking this question we recall that the writer lived in an age when the almost universally accepted belief was that sudden and great calamity was a sign of God's displeasure, and was inflicted upon a person because of some sin. And bearing this in mind, we can seem to follow the thought of the narrator in his interpretation. Uzzah's sudden death was a sign of God's displeasure for some sin. What was the sin? He touched the ark, and God smote him for his disobedience.

But if this was the movement of his thought, we have assurance from the Old Testament itself that his fundamental principle of interpretation was mistaken. Sudden and great calamity is not an indication of sin or of divine displeasure. The book of Job stands in the Old Testament for the explicit denying of that supposition. Job's friends attributed his calamities to some great sin of which he had been guilty. Job knew better, and God endorsed Job and rebuked his friends because of their misinterpretation of his dealing with men. And the most positive affirmation of Jesus in the case of the man blind from birth, of those Galileans

whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and of the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, is that calamity is not an index of divine displeasure. In his dealings with men God does not work in that way.

And as we study this incident more closely we seem to find reason for questioning the accuracy of the narrator's interpretation because of its seeming inconsistency with conceptions of God definitely given in the Old Testament itself.

To his servant Moses, Jehovah is said to have declared his name, his true character and disposition, in the words, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and full of compassion, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." But can we conceive it to have been merciful or gracious, long-suffering, compassionate or forgiving in God to smite with sudden death one who loved him and his service, because in sudden solicitude for God's ark, which the oxen seemed in danger of throwing down, he put forth his hand to steady it? A solicitude which, however needless it may have been, was yet loving? In the one hundred and third Psalm we read, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." How are God's motives and action, as indicated in the story of the death of Uzzah, to be reconciled with this depiction of his character?

And our questioning deepens as we observe that the whole procedure in bringing the ark

from the house of Abinadab was in violation of the law, for infraction of which Uzzah was supposed to have been suddenly struck dead. The ark had been placed upon a cart drawn by oxen. But the explicit provision of the Levitical law was that it should be carried upon the shoulders of the Levites. It was definitely prescribed that the sons of Kohath should have neither carts nor oxen because the service of the sanctuary belonging to them was that they should bear the ark upon their shoulders.

In this removal of the ark from the house of Abinadab, therefore, the provisions of the law were wholly ignored. Can we imagine it to be consistent with any worthy conception of God that he should leave this wholesale disregard of the Levitical law entirely unnoticed, and yet visit vengeance upon a trifling infraction of the law, which, however mistaken it may have been, was yet committed with loving intent?

But it is when we measure the narrator's interpretation of Uzzah's tragic death by the mind of Christ that we are driven inevitably to regard it as subject to correction. The God whom Jesus reveals is the Father of all men, who seeks their welfare; bears and forbears with willful, deliberate sinners; goes after them in their wanderings; pleads with them to turn to a better mind; gives his best beloved to suffer and die for their sakes.

And can it be imagined that the God who allowed his well-beloved Son to be taken by the

hands of wicked men, crucified and slain, and instead of instantly destroying those atrocious sinners, still plead with them to turn to a better mind, would smite with sudden death one who loved him and his service, because inadvertently, in a moment of solicitude for God's own ark, he reached out his hand to steady it? God is the same; yesterday, today and forever. He was present with that moving company from the house of Abinadab, in the same spirit in which, in silence, he witnessed the scenes of Calvary, and no act proceeded from him on that far-off day which did not emanate from the spirit of the All-merciful.

If the revelation of the character of God which Jesus has given is to be received, we are surely compelled to the conclusion that the ancient writer was at fault in his conception of the Eternal One, and that his interpretation of the death of Uzzah must give way to one more in accord with the mind of Christ.

In a similar way all the conceptions and teachings of the Old Testament are to be brought for measurement to the mind of Jesus. They represent the early, immature but advancing stages of that disclosure of God and the spiritual realm which came to its culmination, its efflorescence, in Jesus our Lord. In him they are fulfilled, and by their accord with him their accuracy and worth is to be determined; and, if I mistake not, we do well to take heed lest in our loyalty to the writings of the ancient faith we fall into the error, as in the case of the

incident which we have been studying, of setting the conception of some unknown scribe who lived eight hundred years before Christ, in contradiction of his teaching, of whom out of the unseen, it was declared, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him."

It is worthy of our consideration that if the church had always recognized the authoritativeness of the mind of Christ, and had been true to it, there would have been no Robert Ingersoll, or at least none whose influence as against Christianity would have been at all considerable. For the staple for his attacks upon Christianity consisted of those Old Testament conceptions which are least in accord with the mind of Christ.

"For freedom did Christ set us free." We are called unto liberty; the liberty of Jesus. Stand fast therein and be not entangled again in any yoke of bondage to the ancient faith. Rejoicing in the priceless heritage which is ours in these writings of the earlier covenant, let us not imagine ourselves under constraint to accept any conceptions of God which shock our own moral sense, because they were entertained in some far-off time.

We have the mind of Christ. To that mind all things are to be brought for estimation. The word from the unseen is, "Hear ye him." And therefore there need be no solicitude lest the view of the Bible we have been considering leave nothing stable,—secure, lest we be wholly at sea, with nothing ultimate; no one to assure

us what are final authorities and what are not. The simple and sufficient relief for all such anxiety is the affirmation of the apostle, "We have the mind of Christ." His teachings,—a standard widely applicable; his mind, so far as we yield ourselves up to his leading; the promise of his Spirit to lead us into all the truth. *And there came a cloud overshadowing them: and a voice out of the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son: hear ye him.'*

CHAPTER IV

THE DIVINENESS OF THE NATURAL

CHAPTER IV

The Divineness of the Natural

John 4: 48—*Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe.*

THESE words of Jesus describe a state of mind in the men of his day, by which he was continually confronted, and which constituted one of the most serious obstacles to that blessed work he was seeking to do for them. Coming to his people with his divinest, most gladdening and inspiring messages, and his exhortations to noble living, the truth and authoritativeness of which ought to be self-evident to any right minded man, he was continually met with the demand, "We would see a sign from thee." "What sign showest thou?" "Show us a sign." As if a man in the dazzling glare of noonday should refuse to believe the sun was shining without a written certificate to that effect, bearing the sign manual of the Almighty certified to by two witnesses.

Little wonder is it that, as Mark records, "He sighed deeply in his spirit and saith, 'Why doth this generation seek a sign? Verily I say unto you there shall no sign be given unto this generation.' " But of this attitude of mind the men of Christ's day had no monopoly. It is perhaps

as characteristic of our own time as of his. It is the mental attitude which looks for the divine in the miraculous, in portents and prodigies; which can see no evidence of the existence or presence of God except in some ultra-natural upheaval of things; some irruption of unregulated force into the normal order of the world. This is the same posture of mind as that of the men to whom Jesus said, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in nowise believe."

Now by no words could Jesus more distinctly have declared that this mental attitude and the assumptions underlying it are all wrong. It is not in the miraculous, in irruptive disturbances, in the abnormal and startling that evidence of God is to be seen; not in the preternatural, but in the natural; in the normal ongoing of the universe. There, all the while, spread before the eyes of those who can see, is the marvellous, the inexplicable, the divine. There it was the Hebrew poets saw God making manifestation of himself. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is the expression of thyself in all the earth: Who hast set the splendid manifestation of thyself upon the heavens." Yet living with this splendid display, saturated with the presence of God, continually before our eyes we become obtuse to all sense of its divineness; we go hunting about for some prodigy, and are carried completely off our feet by some bit of thaumaturgy which is unworthy of an instant's

consideration in comparison with those majestic manifestations of God with which nature is all the while crammed.

I conceive that it would be difficult for any one to do us a greater kindness than he who should remove this veil from before our eyes; should awaken us to the divineness of the natural and touch our hearts into appreciation of it.

The first step toward the removal of this mistaken attitude of mind is, if possible, to discover the cause of it;—and some, at least, of the causes of that tendency of men which Jesus bewailed—the tendency to be blind to the divine in the natural and to look for it in the abnormal —are not far to seek.

The first is our insensibility to the marvelousness of what has come to be familiar. That which, when first observed, fills us with amazement, and the sense of the inexplicable, on acquaintance becomes commonplace and ordinary, and loses all power to arouse the wonder of our souls. I venture the assertion that the first time any one of us saw a trolley car rushing along its track, propelled by nothing apparently; the contact of the trolley with the wire—the mysterious secret of it all—he was filled with astonishment and awe. The wire clothed with its tremendous, invisible energy seemed to him nothing less than the naked hand of God. But all that is long since forgotten. A trolley wire is the most commonplace of affairs; of no more significance than any other

wire, except as by accident some unfortunate individual comes in contact with it, and, by its deadly stroke, we are once more reminded of the tremendous power of God which hides within it. And it is some such accidental occurrence as this which startles us into momentary realization of the divine energy which is right before us, far more effectually than the swift, ponderous movement of the car with all its load, which we are continually beholding. This has come to be familiar, and so its wonder has vanished. So through our acquaintance with what is marvellous we become mole-eyed to its inscrutable mystery, dead to its divineness; because it is familiar assuming that we have fathomed its secret, and that it no longer has claim upon our reverence and awe.

We are amused at the open-mouthed wonder of the rustic who for the first time sees a trolley-car or hears of telegraphing without wires. Its newness is past for us and we complacently flatter ourselves that we are sophisticated. The fact is we are stupid, and the staring country man is nearer to a fitting attitude of soul in view of the fathomless wonder his eyes behold, than we are. So the greatest of marvels retreat from our eyes behind the veil of familiarity, and that order of nature which is palpitating, bursting with divineness, comes to be commonplace and without significance.

Not far removed from this tendency to become blind to the wonder of the familiar, is the other tendency to look to the disorderly and

chaotic for evidence of the divine. The majestic order, the sublime harmony of the universe has no particular significance for us.

With undeviating regularity day follows night, and night day. Year after year, by the ceaseless rush of the earth along its orbit, fifty times faster than a cannon ball, the seasons succeed one another in order undisturbed. Without the deviation of a minute vernal and autumnal equinox, summer and winter solstice arrive, with all their characteristic accompaniments in the realm of life vegetable and animal. Age after age, age after age, age after age, Orion, Arcturus, the Pleiades continue their stately march across the heavens with, "no variableness nor shadow that is cast by turning." Scores of years, centuries in advance, the astronomer predicts the instant at which eclipse of sun or moon shall begin; and the phenomenon arrives at the very second indicated.

Yet this majestic order has no special impressiveness for us. We see in it no token of the divine. But let what seems like the slightest interruption of this divine harmony appear, like the unexpected healing of a sick man, or the utterance by an individual of a few unmeaning words in a language unfamiliar to him, and we are ready to fall upon our knees in astonishment and awe. As if only disorder and confusion were the work of God and the witness to his presence.

Coupled with the two causes already referred

to as accounting for that demand for signs and wonders which Jesus bewailed, is a false dualism which too largely characterizes our thinking with reference to God and the universe. We tacitly assume that God and the universe are distinct and separate from one another, even if we do not consciously so think of them. We even go farther and conceive of them as mutually antagonistic. In our thought the universe is something over against God, of which he can get the better only with difficulty if at all. It is a vast intractable somewhat, which it is of the greatest moment that God should subdue to his purposes; but the mastery of which is a matter of exceeding difficulty and uncertainty.

But the reality is just contrary to all this. The universe is nothing other than God expressing himself. It is his perpetual self-revelation. In it, through it, he is all the while manifesting himself. Nature is not something apart from God. It is divine energy bringing things to pass; under the direction of divine will, for the expression of divine thought, and the accomplishment of divine purpose.

Nature, the normal order of the universe, is the unceasing revelation of God. So the Hebrew singer conceived it, so he expressed it in those words already quoted, "How majestic is the expression of thyself in all the earth; who hast set the splendid manifestation of thyself upon the heavens." "Holy, holy, holy is the

Lord; the whole earth is full of his glory"—the forth-shining of his presence.

These then are some of the causes which conspire to make us insensible to the divineness of the natural, and which incline us like the unbelieving Jews to whom Jesus spoke to be continually seeking for a sign of God and his presence. We grow blind to the marvellousness of that with which we are familiar. We fail to perceive the divineness in majestic order and sublime harmony, and go hunting for it in the unorderly and chaotic. We conceive of God and the universe as separate, antagonistic, when we should recognize that God is the living soul of the universe, and the universe the living expression, the visible garment of God.

By apprehending these tendencies which lead us astray, and by setting ourselves to resist their unwholesome influence upon us, we may escape the abnormal craving for the supernatural which more or less affects us all, and have our vision unsealed to that presence of God, that perpetual expression of the divine by which we are continually enfolded.

Among the very few occasions which moved Jesus our Lord to impatience, this clamor for the miraculous was one. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given them." Words could not well express more definitely the relative insignificance which Jesus attached to the supernatural—the abnormal—as witness to the presence of God. They who could not perceive

him, in that expression which he is continually making of himself in the order of his universe, would see him, to little profit, in signs and wonders.

I trust there is no misapprehension in any mind of the precise point which I am seeking to emphasize. It is not the reality of the supernatural that we are considering. It is its relative significance as an exhibition of the divine; a witness to God and his presence. As regards this the position of Jesus is unmistakable, that is, that, as witness to the divine, the abnormal, the preternatural, the disturbance of the order of nature, is wholly secondary and relatively insignificant. Even as regards the life of Jesus himself this is true. In his human life he, like all other men, was included in this universe of which we are all a part. And his divineness as the forth-shining of the Father's glory and the express image of his person was not through his separateness from or antithesis to the universe of men, but in his being the culmination of the universe, the point in which that revelation, which from eternity God has been making of himself through the universe, came to its perfection.

It was not in the unhumanness of Jesus that his divinity was disclosed; but in the perfection of his humanity; that humanity made to bear the image of God, and at last in Jesus so attaining that likeness that he could say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

The divineness of Jesus himself, that is, is

not to be sought in certain abnormal or miraculous occurrences in the physical universe, but in himself; in that personality, character, spirit which made it possible for him to say "He that seeth me seeth Him that sent me."

It is this fact which gives their weight of condemnation to those other words to the unbelieving Jews, "I say unto you that ye have seen me and yet have not believed."

That which seems clearly to be implied in the teaching of Jesus is that if the supernatural did occur, if it were to occur again, it could not possibly be more positive witness to God, more true and adequate manifestation of him, than he is all the while making in that ordinary, orderly on-going of the universe, which from eternity he has adopted as the habitual, perpetual revelation of himself.

> "Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God."

Now this divineness of the natural is no merely theoretical matter. As merely theoretical or even as theological I should have no interest in bringing it before you. It is intensely practical, and the sole warrant for considering it at all, is the wish that you and I should not miss the true good; that best which our heavenly Father is all the time seeking to bestow upon us.

The evil effect of our blindness to the divineness of the natural and our craving for the supernatural is manifold. First it leads us to

dishonor the living, present God. Under its influence, instead of receiving that revelation of himself which he is all the while making before our eyes, like the Pharisees in the presence of Jesus we come with the demand "Show us a sign from heaven." Instead of recognizing that insistent all-enveloping nearness of God, in which we live, we blind our eyes to this, and go looking for Him in some remote, out-of-the-way, unusual manifestation. But, in the words of Tennyson,

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams and a stifled splendor and gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

A second evil effect of this diseased craving for the extra-natural is that it leads us to build our Christian confidence on a false and insecure foundation. The natural, the majestic order of the universe is indisputable, unquestionable. No man dreams of doubting it. In this we have witness to God, ground for our faith, which cannot be challenged.

The miraculous—the violation of nature—is always open to doubt, always questionable, and increasingly questioned as the mind of man enlarges, and through increasing knowledge he comes to better understanding and grasps ever more firmly the great order of the universe.

Many things that once seemed miraculous, supernatural, are now seen to be but higher manifestations of nature itself, brought about by larger mastery of her laws, not by abrogation of them.

The wonderful works of Jesus are established beyond question; but the nature of those works is by no means beyond question. More and more urgently it is being asked whether they were, as has so commonly been assumed, definitely miraculous; violations of the order of nature; or whether they were brought about through his greater knowledge of that nature, which is itself the unceasing manifestation of God his Father. So whatever may be true as to the actuality of the miraculous within certain limits, those limits are continually narrowing, more and more occurrences once deemed supernatural are being found to be entirely within the field of nature itself.

A religious faith which depends on the miraculous, the violation of nature, as its foundation, is finding less and less on which to build. The faith which sees God in nature is tremorless, secure. In the great universe of God is its unchallenged guaranty, perpetually before its eyes.

Another most unfortunate consequence of our abnormal craving for the supernatural is that it leads us to live impoverished lives in the midst of inexhaustible riches. Peering always into the out-of-the-way in search of signs

and wonders we remain blind to the treasures of the spiritual and divine which are everywhere before us and about us. We anticipate that, after death, in some other universe we shall find the treasures of the spiritual, and rejoice in them. But do we reflect that we shall never be in any other universe than that we inhabit today? We shall never be any nearer God than we are this instant. God is in this place—even though, like Jacob, in our dulness we know it not. "This is none other than the house of God: this is the gate of heaven." We shall never be any nearer heaven in locality than we are this morning. Life in the realm of the spiritual is not a question of locality, but of vision.

When the servant of Elisha, seeing his master surrounded by the chariots of the Syrians, exclaimed, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?" Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened, and, behold! the mountain was full of chariots and horses of fire round about Elisha. All the while you and I live submerged in the riches of the spiritual realm; ours to possess and enjoy if we will but see and appropriate it. "But I do not see," is it answered? Neither do you and I see those innumerable vibrations of light, less frequent than the red, more frequent than the violet rays of the spectrum, which are there, notwithstanding, and none the less really so because we chance to be blind. The question is not of light to be perceived, but of eyes capable of seeing.

The Divineness of the Natural

In the presence of that bursting life which is throbbing in all the world, in bud and tree and flower and garden and harvest, who can be blind to the divineness of the natural? Who can need any further witness to the presence of God?

The mightiest of all rivers is that majestic stream which, draining by far the greater part of the South American continent, at last pours its vast volume of water through its mouth, one hundred and eighty miles in width, with a momentum so great as to bear its flood still fresh nearly two hundred miles into the Atlantic. It is reported that a sailing vessel in the southern Atlantic was so long becalmed that its water supply was at the point of exhaustion; its crew suffering the tortures of thirst but husbanding with watchful care the little water that was left lest it be utterly consumed. In their extremity their sight was gladdened by the appearance of a steamer above the horizon. Tokens of distress were displayed and as the steamer approached the captain of the sailing vessel signalled: "Water, for God's sake, water." The steamer without checking her speed for an instant veered again to the course she had abandoned, but from her bridge there was flagged back the thrilling message, "Dip, man, dip. You are in the Amazon."

Is any one seeking a sign? Let him open his eyes.

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE LIMITATIONS

CHAPTER V

The Divine Limitations

John 16: 12—*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

AND so Jesus found a limit, beyond which he could not go. There was much which he was willing to give, eager to give to those twelve associates whom he had gathered about him; but this he was unable to do. There stood the barrier. Beyond it he could not pass.

That God is subject to limitation, is foreign to our customary modes of thought. Yet this is, beyond question, the truth. The Eternal Mind, the lavish Giver of good is limited in his ability to do for us. Limited not in his resources or in his willingness to bestow, but by our own meagerness, our narrow receptivity. Be it never so well disposed, the ocean can impart but little of itself to a teacup. In our capacity and capability the ability of God toward us finds its measure.

"The fault, . . . is in ourselves that we are underlings."

As regards all those gifts which one person may confer upon another, this truth of God's limitation holds; and it is no mere abstract theoretical proposition. None is more practical. In its keeping is all such largeness of

personality, such richness of life as we shall ever attain. For in every department of our spiritual being, intellectual, æsthetic, social, we are at the outset but a great capacity, a want to be supplied. We have nothing, we are nothing which we have not received; and according to the measure and the eagerness of our receiving is our having, and our being.

In the bestowing of truth upon us, the impartation of knowledge, the Eternal Mind from whom all truth proceeds, works under sharply defined limitations.

Against these limitations Christ had come in his intercourse with Peter and James and John; and for one who has ears to catch it there is genuine pathos in those words with which we began: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." However, the pathos is not that of despair. In the case of these men the limitation was not final. Jesus foresaw the removal of it and the passage of these, his friends, by and by, out into those large realms of truth in which his own soul found life and gladness.

And this suggests that the limitations under which the Eternal Friend must work in his dealing with us are of diverse nature. Some are transient. It is reasonable to expect that, as life goes on, they may be successively removed, so as to afford continually enlarging opportunity for the divine benevolence to express itself, even if they shall never altogether disappear. To some other limitations, however, we

shall find that no such hope of self-correction attaches. One of those temporary restrictions which do not necessarily constitute any occasion for solicitude, is that immaturity into which we all are born. The undeveloped mind constitutes a limitation. To the child it is possible to impart only the simplest, most elementary truth. No teacher, however learned or skilful, can overleap this barrier. The problems of calculus can have no meaning to one who is ignorant of simple algebra. As the lad's comprehension is enlarged, his penetration sharpened through acquiring simpler truth, the more difficult may be imparted to him. As Browning puts it:

> "I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
> Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
> So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth:
> When they can eat, babe's nuture is withdrawn."

In the normal development of personality this limitation may be expected to take care of itself.

Yet this is but a gradual process. For the retention or removal of this immaturity we ourselves are largely responsible, and to the end of life we never wholly escape from it. Always we are children in this particular. To the wisest, most venerable who ever lived, those words were still as applicable as to the Galilean fisherman, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

The Apostle Paul is fully aware that he knows only in part, and anticipates a knowing so much more complete that all his present

knowledge will be insignificant. Even in dealing with him the divine mind is still under limitation.

Associated with this immaturity of mind as a hindrance to the divine impartation of knowledge to us, is the fact that even the simpler truth which we may be able to receive must be given to us in a defective form. All transference of thought from one mind to another, from teacher to learner, is by means of symbols. The very truth itself cannot be conveyed. It can at best be suggested. We communicate only by signs, whatever be our mode of conveying our thoughts to one another. If two who are conversing attach precisely the same significance to the signs employed the thought is exactly conveyed. But this is rarely the case. To one the symbol means one thing. To another something slightly different. It was accidently discovered that the grandson of Dr. William Adams, for many years pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, had great fear of entering the church when it was unoccupied. What was the occasion of this terror it was impossible to discover, until on one occasion Dr. Adams went to the building on some errand taking the child with him. As they walked down the aisle their steps echoing through the vacant building, the little lad clung closely to his grandfather's hand and looked anxiously about till, reaching the pulpit he inquired, "Grandpa, where is the zeal?" "The zeal?" said Dr. Adams. "Yes, don't you

know? 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' " You can imagine the good doctor's astonishment as he discovered that a religious emotion had been transformed, in the imagination of the child, into a terrible monster which inhabited churches and devoured those who entered.

The incident is scarcely more amusing than it is pathetic; for it simply illustrates in an exaggerated way what is taking place in all our intercourse with one another. Rarely does a thought pass unmodified from one mind to another. And that not alone by reason of the difference in our mental furniture, but also because of the defectiveness in our means of communication. We talk in signs and symbols. We convey truth by means of analogies. All language is merely a collection of symbols. The words we employ in speaking of the mind and spirit are terms which were originally applied to material objects and relations, which we transfer to things of the non-material realm because of analogies which seem to us to exist between things physical and things spiritual. But no analogy is perfect. No symbol represents reality with absolute exactness. To one mind it means one thing; to another somewhat different. As a consequence, in order that the limitation upon the teacher's ability to impart truth may be removed, and reality apprehended with increasing exactness by the learner, it is often needful that one set of symbols be replaced by another representing reality more

accurately, and more exactly understood by the one who is taught.

It is this deep truth of our intellectual experience which Browning has expressed in his poem "A Death in the Desert."

> "Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
> He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
> What he considers that he knows today,
> Come but tomorrow, he will find misknown;
>
> * * * *
>
> God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
> And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
> As midway help till he reach fact indeed."

So it is we learn. So it is that the immature mind and the sign-language which is all any of us uses, set limitations to the impartation of truth, before which any teacher human or divine must pause.

And this has its bearing on the question most deeply exercising the mind of the church in this day, that is, the question of the nature of the Bible; the revelation recorded in these Holy Scriptures.

More and more clearly it is being recognized that this was a progressive revelation; beginning with the disclosure of simpler, more elementary truths, and proceeding to those of deeper import, loftier significance. No less manifest is the fact that throughout there has been endeavor to convey spiritual and religious truth by means of symbolism, and that as time has gone on the form of symbolism adapted to the immature mind, seriously defective at times,

yet easily apprehensible, has been replaced by others more adequately and exactly embodying the truth to be conveyed. That this has been so is evident from the study of the Bible itself. That it should be so was inevitable; because of the limitation which the immaturity of our minds is always imposing upon the divine Teacher.

And what was before the coming of Jesus has been so since his day. Under the guidance of that Holy Spirit, which he promised, the Christian centuries have come into the possession of many of those treasures of divine truth which the twelve disciples were not able to bear; and the great verities of the world unseen have found interpretation through successively higher forms of symbolism. For example, how greatly God, our relation to him, the life of the spirit, have gained in vital significance for us through our employment of the analogies of life in the interpretation of these great realities, in place of those analogies of law and government in which our fathers clothed their thought. And as the past, the future.

By the immaturity of his children, God is always limited in imparting knowledge to them. But this is a constantly receding barrier. It makes great demands on the divine patience. It affords no occasion for despair.

Another limitation under which God labors in his dealing with us, twin sister to undeveloped intellect, is inexperience. No acuteness or vigor of intellect can qualify one to apprehend

truth of a certain order. It is acquired through no process of ratiocination; through no gift of native insight. Life is the great interpreter of reality; and truth, of the order referred to, we learn only by living. Only through a common experience can some thoughts of one mind be conveyed to another. The most brilliant disciplined intellect of the boy can make nothing of some things, which are simple, clear as the sun at midday to the unlettered man of ordinary mind who has lived. However penetrating of intellect, however earnest in intent may be the speaker, there are tones of a certain depth which in the exercise of the eager intellect alone are never struck; because it has never entered the region to which these tones pertain. It has had no experience, as yet, of those great unseen realities, through the touch of which these deeper tones become the natural expression of the spirit.

"If I were but a young man," said the great master to his pupil of brilliant voice but shallow feeling, "I would win your love, and break your heart; and then you would sing." "Yes," said a friend to me on one occasion, concerning a speaker who had occupied my pulpit, "he is a fine young man. Some of these days when he has a grave in his heart, he will preach." It is through experience one comes to understand.

There is pathetic suggestion of the limitations under which Jesus constantly felt himself, as he attempted to impart deep truth to men in those often repeated words, "He that hath ears

to hear let him hear." So many there were whose ears had never been opened.

This same fact of divine limitation has other outlook. It is not truth, knowledge, alone God has to bestow. Treasures of beauty are in his gift. The perception of the beautiful and gladness in it he is ready to confer upon us without stint. These, like his own spirit, "he giveth not by measure." And yet how circumscribed is that Soul of Beauty which informs the universe, in its ability to confer upon us! How much of beauty God has to bestow,—how sorely he is limited in his giving, by our narrowness, we little realize, till by the touch of some great interpreter, like Ruskin or Van Dyke our eyes are opened to the unnumbered beauties, which all our lives we have looked at, yet never seen.

In his giving God is limited by our dullness of observation, and also by our slowness of heart, our undeveloped aesthetic nature. That one may enter into the treasures of music, there are needed the ear trained to catch the delicacies of tone-shading, and the soul cultivated to vibrate to the inexpressible majesty of harmony.

> "Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God;
> But only they who see take off their shoes,
> The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."

And even more significant is the limitation imposed upon God, in the bestowal of his greatest gift—the richness of personal relationship with himself. It was this which constituted the great riches of the life of Jesus. It was

this with which he fain would have flooded the lives of his chosen friends: the knowledge of God; acquaintance with the Eternal Father. That he might help them to this he opened up to them the great depths of his own heart. He spoke of the great self-sacrifice he was himself to make in their behalf. He endeavored to disclose the measureless lovingness in which this sacrifice was freely offered. And the noblest response he succeeded in eliciting was a petty contention among themselves as to which should have the foremost places in the kingdom. So men continually limit the Eternal Friend in the giving of that greatest of all gifts, which is our life, fellowship with himself.

However ready any great personality may be to confer himself upon his brother men, a limit is set to his giving by the caliber of those who are to receive. The crowd wish to see him. They stare, listen and come away, having seen and heard nothing larger than themselves. The great mind can give its great thoughts only to the large, apprehensive intellect. The soul of beauty can impart its conceptions only to the perceptive, the truly aesthetic. The heart of great nobleness, of deep affection, can bestow itself only on the one who, in some measure, vibrates to the same key.

As already indicated, this limitation upon God's giving, is in part the result of immaturity and inexperience. If these were the sole cause, however, they would be in the way of taking care of themselves. The atrocious crime of be-

ing young, time speedily removes. Life, the great school-master, withholds from none those lessons of experience which open eyes, ears, heart.

There are, however, other causes which limit God's ability to give to us, which are not thus self-corrective. For example, conceit, low content and indolence.

To the teachable mind, however undeveloped, all possibilities of knowledge lie open. The conceited spirit is hopeless. It can be taught nothing. In the phrase of Lord Bacon, "The kingdom of learning, like the kingdom of heaven, can be entered only by the spirit of the little child." The realm of beauty is locked to the artist satisfied with his own achievement. Upon the egotistic, the self-sufficient, the truly great soul can confer but little of the riches of its fellowship.

So also the mind of low content can know but little, can appreciate but little of the richly beautiful; can possess nothing of noble greatness. Upon the one who will not aspire, even the heavenly powers can bestow nothing.

And yet again, he who would know must do. He who would have his possessions increased must use those he has. Expression is the measure of impression, the psychologists tell us. Utter in act the truth you have received, if you would have your store of truth increased. Use the talent you have, or even it shall be forfeited. Give the beautiful conception form, or it shall fade away, and the very power of conceiving

the beautiful become atrophied. It is the principle involved in those words of Jesus: Take heed to that ye hear; do the truth you know; and to you that hear shall more be given.

Unlike immaturity and inexperience these limitations upon God's power of bestowal, be it repeated, are not self-corrective. The lapse of time, of itself, has no tendency to remove them; but rather to establish them more firmly. The lessons of experience may have some qualifying effect upon the self-sufficiency of early life; but there are many whose conceit, like their follies, survive their youth, and who are self-sufficient as well as ignorant in spite of experience. And over low content and indolence, time and life's teaching have no power. If these limitations upon God's giving to us are to be removed we ourselves must remove them. We can cultivate the spirit that is teachable. We can spur ourselves to aspiration, till through our deep delight in the large and beautiful the spur shall be no longer needful, and our awakened thirst shall be the security of continually enlarging gifts from God. We can do faithfully the things we know, and so make possible our larger knowing and our larger possession of the things which as yet "eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man." But we alone can do this; and before the barriers of our conceit, our low content and our indolence, if permitted to remain, the Giver of all good stands impotent to bestow.

This truth of the divine limitation is of wide

application. It pertains to all we gather up under the term salvation. There are those who rely on the divine goodness to give salvation to men whatever their response to the call of God. But this is impossible. Salvation is the man come to his full self-realization, and put in possession of all that might be his own. It means this if it means anything. But this the Infinite himself may not confer. Salvation is in one aspect a gift; as knowledge is a gift; as the enjoyment of beauty is a gift; as friendship is a gift. But in another aspect, equally real, salvation is distinctly an achievement. It is to be had, if had at all, through the opening of oneself to receive it; through the stretching of one's capacity to appropriate it; through incorporating it into oneself by doing the deeds of a Christly life.

Set in this universe of marvelous richness, with its inexhaustible stores of truth to be known, of beauty to be preceived, of divine fellowship to be enjoyed; the word of the ancient philosopher gathers up the truth for each of us, "Man is the measure of all things." Though we live under the limitations of immaturity, yet for all who will, the limit moves. We shall never reach a point at which farther expansion is not possible; nor one at which the riches of the universe will be exhausted.

If any of us shall fail of the fullest possession of all richest good of which our being is capable, the limitation will be nowhere but in our own aspirations and affections.

CHAPTER VI

THE DIVINE CONSIDERATENESS

CHAPTER VI

The Divine Considerateness

Isaiah 42: 3—*A bruised reed shall he not break and a dimly burning wick shall he not quench.*

IN the life of the people to whom these words were spoken, reeds had important uses. Baskets, boats and mats were woven of reeds. What we call a cane, a walking-staff, was a cane indeed, a reed. A reed served the purpose of a yard stick. Pipes for conveying liquids were segments of reeds. A reed provided the musician with his flute.

It is the gatherer of reeds for these various uses who comes before us in the first picture of the prophet's declaration. Among the tall straight stems which he gathers by the river side is one which some creature has trodden upon. Bent to the ground, crushed, bruised,—it seems a poor worthless affair. Might it not as well be entirely broken off and done with? Here is one who says, "Not so. This bruised thing is not hopelessly injured. There is life in it still. Straighten it; bind it up; give it chance to recover, and it may yet become strong, straight and beautiful."

The dimly burning, smoking wick of an oriental lamp—a strand of flax in a little vessel from

which the oil is exhausted—is not an attractive thing. It is, rather, altogether unpromising and offensive. "Out with it as soon as possible." "But no," says another voice. "Do not extinguish it because it is disagreeble. The smoke itself testifies to the presence of some fire. Possibly it may be made to blaze up and give light again. Pour in oil that the feeble flickering may be quickened into flame." So, says the prophet, will the coming messenger of Israel's God deal with the imperfect feeble goodnesses of men.

It is a beautiful interpretation of the disposition of God, in whom we live, toward us, the children of men, and of his treatment of our feeble, deformed beginnings of worthy attainment. Continually the eternal Father is on the watch for traces of the better life in us men. Where he finds these,—an effort, however halting and vacillating,—an aspiration, however fluctuating and uncertain,—a purpose, however feeble and intermittent; he does not censure this, harshly treat it with severity because it is so little; he does not view it in its faultiness and reject it because of its defects. He rather rejoices that there is any beginning of worthiness which he may cherish and encourage, and with all patient tenderness he fosters this, that he may bring it to its possible perfection.

Burbank, among his thousands of vegetable growths, is continually on the watch for promising variations. The very least of these commands instant attention and unstinted care.

Light, moisture, fertilization of soil;—whatever conditions are needful for this stranger's development are provided without hesitation, that latent possibilities may come to their realization in a spineless cactus, a seedless apple, a new improved fruit or vegetable.

In his story of the Ascent of Man, Henry Drummond has traced the path by which the nobler unselfish spirit has come to be so influential in the life of the world; with promise of being actually the overmastering influence in human society. In the earliest stages of life's history in the earth, the selfish spirit had the field undisputed. In the fierce struggle for existence, "Look out for number one," "Each for himself" was the law. Gradually another impulse emerges: struggle for the life of others; risking of self for the sake of offspring. The social instinct begins to have play. In the herd, the swarm of bees, the colony of ants, the individual forgets himself and labors for the common good. Even among ferocious wild beasts this impulse has force. Kipling has reminded us that "the law of the wolf is the pack." Not each for himself, but each for all. At last in this slow upward movement toward the unselfish life, has come the human mother, the deepest impulse of whose being is loving and giving.

Over all this long upward movement through the countless ages, the Eternal One, our God, has watched, patient, considerate; not breaking the bruised reed, nor extinguishing the dimly burning wick, but cherishing, cultivating, till

the feeble possibilities become nobly real. It is that same unwearying considerateness which has all our possibilities of personal worth in its keeping.

Our first feeble impulse towards larger, better things, is of his implanting. But for him it would not be there at all. The language of the prayer-book is correct. From the over-watching, divine One "all holy desires, all good counsels and all just works do proceed."

And tardy as may be the growth of the worthier life, distorted as may be its development by the pressure of ignoble propensity from within, or of the hampering conditions from without, still the bruised reed he will not break. Though we may be fully aware ourselves that the lamp burns dimly, uncertainly, and that in its feeble flickering there is more to condemn than to commend, he will not extinguish it in judgment, but will foster it in his fatherly care; and not until we ourselves have deliberately quenched the smoking flax will that patient considerateness be exhausted.

How the life of Jesus testified to all this and fulfilled the prophet's anticipation concerning the one who should sometime come and interpret God to the world!

Among the outcasts of society, publicans, sinners, those who had lost all hope for themselves, he went seeking the bruised reeds and the flickering lamps; and these he kindled into the lights which have guided the world's civilization in its upward march of twenty centuries; these he

made the strong staffs—the men of character—upon whom every worthy cause might lean for support.

Toward our feeble understandings, our childish conceptions we are warranted in believing this divine considerateness is exercised. And surely there is need of it. Lowell might well say, "I think God must be greatly amused with us." How foolish the conceptions of the wisest must appear to the Eternal Mind. We look back to the scientific notions of the wise men of the past, their conceptions of the physical universe and its ongoing, and smile, as we are justified in doing, at their childish fancifulness. But it is probable that the present-day conceptions of the foremost scientist would appear scarcely less childish if set in contrast with absolute reality. Upon those infantile reasonings of the distant past the Eternal Intelligence, we may be sure, did not look with scorn, for defective, fanciful as they were, there was in them the germ which has unfolded into the more accurate knowledge of today. If anywhere in the realm of intelligence God might have been moved to break the bruised reed and quench the dimly burning wick, it surely would have been in connection with the thoughts men have entertained concerning himself. To what horrible, slanderous conceptions of the Eternal One the religions of the world bear witness. How men have wronged him, traduced him in their thoughts. And yet the Eternal Goodness has not rejected those whom we call the heathen be-

cause of this; but into their darkness has sent increasing light. That men thought of him at all was something; and in this something, unworthy as it was, was a germ to be cultivated in patience, rather than to be crushed in judgment.

And fortunate for us it may be that this same divine considerateness is over us all. We walk in the light of the Christian day; but we may little suspect how true it is of ourselves that we see as in a mirror, indistinctly. How the fatherly goodness of the Eternal has been maligned sometimes by that which imagined itself to be Christian theology! The Apostle Paul was confident that he saw but in part, and that part so partial, that when the perfect should be revealed the part would be lost to view. Toward our feeble, childish understanding of him God is considerate. If we will but let him, he will develop that flickering flame into something far more worthy of us and of him.

Over the mixed motives by which we are influenced more largely than we are aware, perhaps, the same considerateness is exercised. We smile at the generosity of the little child who presents us with its treasured possession in the evident expectation that it will be given back or will bring some larger gift in return. A largely qualified generosity it is indeed. Yet nothing could be more mistaken than to crush this bruised reed. Tinged with consideration of self as this impulse is, it involves a germ of spontaneous self-forgetfulness which only needs

to be cultivated to shed its unsightliness, and blossom beautifully.

When under some flash of revealing light we of older years experience how mixed and unworthy are the motives which have influenced us, it is comfort to know that God is considerate, and that his disposition is not to quench the smoking flax because of its offensiveness, but to cherish it because of its possibilities of flame.

Over our vacillating purposes, our seemingly ineffectual struggles after the better life, the same divine considerateness hovers. Again and again we determine to get the better of some unworthy propensity, to break off some evil practice; and again and again we allow ourselves to be defeated. In our discouragement we are ready to throw up our hands in surrender. But when we are hopeless over our failure, God is not. In that last unsuccessful attempt you made to conquer the besetting sin, of the remembrance of which you would gladly be rid, he sees a flickering flame. The very regret you feel, the humiliation in view of defeat, is a sign of life; the revelation of unrealized possibilities. A bruised reed indeed, and yet one which the God in whom we live would fain bind up and foster into stately strength and beauty. As Browning has put it—

> "All instincts immature,
> All purposes unsure,
> * * * *
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God."

It is good for us to grasp this truth of the divine considerateness in all its realness. I take it there is no one of us who does not sorely need it at times if hope is not utterly to fail. In hours of sharp discrimination, when, through some revealing experience, we see ourselves as we really are, the best among us become aware that a bruised reed, a dimly burning lamp, is the most fitting symbol of our strength and worthiness. In the patient considerateness of our God is our only ground for encouragement.

And that considerate forbearance is not only comfort. It surely ought to be mighty incentive and warrant for great expectation. If he still believes in us, shall we not be spurred to make sure that his confidence is not disappointed? If he will but stay with us, we surely must win in the end.

And the inference from God's considerateness toward ourselves—what is it but unconquerable hopefulness for others, even the most unpromising? Who shall say of any man that he is beyond hope? Among all whom we have known, what one was there whose wick did not give forth some feeble flame? Which of us ever knew any person who was absolutely and utterly bad? It was the unpromising pagan centurion of whom Jesus could say, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." It was the unpromising Samaritan leper who alone of all the ten healed returned to give thanks to his benefactor. It was the unpromising publican—the despised tax gatherer of Jericho, who re-

sponded to the appeal to the better life with the gift of half of his property to the poor and fourfold restoration of all unfair exactions. It was the unpromising woman of the street who showed herself nearer to the heart of God than the reputable, self-satisfied Pharisee. The inspiration of the Salvation Army has been its invincible conviction that the very lowest and worst of men is salvable; that no one is beyond hope. And through the life-giving touch of that triumphant confidence, from the lowest depths of degradation and sin have come saints of God, to take their place among the noblest spirits of this generation.

For this unwearying divine considerateness, blessed be God! Comfort in our hours of discouragement, incentive to all patient endeavor, pledge of our ultimate attainment, guaranty of hope and effort for the least promising of the children of men.

CHAPTER VII

LIGHT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

CHAPTER VII

Light for the Righteous

Psalms 97: 11—*Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart.*

BY whom these words were written we have no certain knowledge; but of this, at least, we are certain, that he had the soul of a poet as well as of a seer. He was inspired not alone in the vision of truth, but in the expression of truth as well; he was gifted with the poet's art of saying things.

And what an art it is. The ability so to embody a truth in words that these shall not only affirm the proposition to be enunciated, but shall also suggest confirmation or illustration of the truth declared. It is said of Daniel Webster that he had the ability so to state a proposition that the simple statement was an argument in its support. That the author of this Ninety-seventh Psalm was a master in this witchery of words, needs no other attestation than this declaration: "Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart."

What these words directly affirm is the certain issue of good which awaits the man of pure heart and upright life. But by implication they

teach far more than this. They indicate the method by which this result is brought about. They suggest the interpretation to be put upon possible occurrences which, at the time, may seem to be inconsistent with the principle stated. The very phraseology, by virtue of the analogies it suggests, is such as to encourage ready and confident acceptance of the proposition affirmed.

Light is sown for the righteous. Seed has been dropped. It is already in the soil, under the operation of forces adapted to bring to maturity the harvest indicated.

Both the direct affirmation and the side thoughts which spring from it are full of precious meaning.

First, the declaration itself. Light is sown for the righteous. Blessings of mind and heart are surely in store for the upright, light and gladness. Light which illumines, makes clear our way; light, which cheers; gladness, the heart's life.

Second, the ground of confident assurance that this is so, suggested by the pregnant phraseology. There can be no failure, for the seed is sown. The issue, that is to say, is in the very nature of things. It comes about in no haphazard and uncertain way; by no arbitrary interjection of energy from without. On the contrary it is yoked up with the great order of the universe. The inherent constitution of things is such as to bring this about normally, inevitably, even as the harvest follows the sow-

ing. It takes place as automatically, if you choose so to express it, as fire burns or stones fall.

Or, to phrase it otherwise, in these words the poet affirms the great fundamental truth, that this universe we inhabit is a moral universe, in which consequents follow from their antecedents as inevitably as in the realm of physical force; and in which light and gladness are inseparably yoked to righteous living.

Upon this assertion of the poet the undeviating experience of the generations has set its positive confirmation. Of the light which illumines, this is true; the light of the mind in which we are enabled to see things as they are, to perceive spiritual verities and to adjust ourselves to them. Nothing is better established than the dependence of the intellectual upon the moral; the dependence of clear seeing upon right living. Unerring as gravity is that law of the spirit by which it comes about that, "the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." While, "the way of the wicked is as darkness. They know not at what they stumble."

It was no arbitrary, exceptional provision which Jesus announced in the words—"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It was instead the undeviating law of spiritual perception. Over and over again, and in varying form he stated it. "Take heed to that ye hear, and to you that

hear shall more be given." Do the truth you know, if you would hope for increasing knowledge. "If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know." The unvarying experience of nineteen centuries is confirmation of this great truth, which holds front rank among the principles of modern psychology. The pure in heart do see God. To the impure and unrighteous, the vision of the spiritual and eternal is impossible. It is the fact that he that doeth truth is not only willing to come to the light, but that he does come to the light. For the righteous soul many perplexities are resolved. He attains the point of view from which the puzzling is made plain. As the maze of cycles and epicycles by which the ptolemaic astronomy attempted to explain the movements of the heavenly bodies, is reduced to simplicity when one takes the sun and not the earth as the center and point of observation, so by yielding oneself to the leadings of righteousness, a person comes to be at one with God; he looks through God's eyes. Things are seen in their consistent simplicity. The complicated becomes—tends to become—clear.

For the righteous also is sown that other light which cheers, and with the same undeviating certainty, by virtue of the very nature of things, the harvest is sure to follow. "Surely the light is sweet," says the writer of Ecclesiastes, "and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." How our emotional nature responds to the glory of the light which floods

the outer world. After a period of gloom, a day of sunshine sets our hearts bubbling with joy. Life is indeed worth living. Hopefulness lifts us as on mighty wings. No undertaking seems too difficult to be grappled with. The light of good fellowship is on all faces, good will is in all hearts.

A far mightier, more satisfying cheer is the gift of that light which irradiates the soul's inner sky. "Many there be," says the psalmist, "that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than they have when their corn and their wine are increased." There is no gloom like that of estrangement from God; no burden like that of conscious unrighteousness. Nothing else has such power to drive men to despair. How many have sought escape from its tortures by the taking of their own lives. How many others have been driven to make acknowledgment of unsuspected guilt, and gladly to accept the penalty of evil deeds, in order to escape the lash of that self-condemnation which pursued them and would give them no peace.

On the other hand, there is no joy like his who lives in the light of God's countenance, in the sense of God's approval. Privation, calamity, distress, the protean shapes of outward adversity, are powerless to darken that inner sky in which this light still shines. Hear the ring of unconquerable optimism in the exultant words of that prophet of the olden time: "Though the

fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation."

In this conception of light as the light which cheers, it is of course identical with the gladness promised in the second half of the text to the upright in heart.

And this light too is "sown." Its dawning is sure. It arises in the nature of the case. Not through the operation of impersonal necessity; because this light pertains wholly to the realm of personality. It springs out of the accord of man's spirit with the spirit of God. It is radiance born of the divine friendship. Yet its coming is assured in the very constitution of things. To the upright in heart it cannot fail. Because the God who is at the heart of the universe is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, your Father and mine, who makes the sun of his outer world to rise upon the evil and upon the good, seeking out the dark places that he may illumine them with radiance, and the light of whose love goes out to find responsive hearts and to bring them into the joy of conscious fellowship with himself. For every one of upright heart that fellowship is in waiting.

By the very laws of personal relationship it is only for the upright in heart that this gladness is possible. By the same laws, to the up-

right in heart it is assured. As harvests follow seed sowing, by causal connection, so infallibly, by the very constitution of the universe, light and gladness are in store for the righteous.

In keeping with this analogy of the seed and the harvest also, is a fact of human experience which often occasions sore perplexity; which has led many a heart to question whether goodness is really at the center of the universe; whether this expectation of any desirable outcome for the upright in heart is all a delusion. It is the fact that the fruit of light and gladness is often very slow in appearing; to our vision does not appear at all.

But harvests are the result of growth and take time. Harvests are the result of vicissitude, not of unbroken sunshine. Cold and heat, wet and dry, calm and storm, all have their part in maturing them. Occurrences which might well enough seem hostile, even fatal, are really contributory to best results. Upon the grain sown in autumn snows will fall; frosts will bite the tender blade; winter will seem to be set upon the nullification of the farmer's toil. But in spite of all these—as the result of them, indeed, —the crop will be gathered in.

True it is, that across the path of the upright in heart the problem of suffering casts its dark shadow. And when the heart is torn and bleeding over the loss of one more precious than life itself, whose presence seemed to be all that made life worth living; when crushing disaster falls upon one and upon those far dearer than

himself, and poverty, humiliation and privation stare them in the face; when one suffers irreparable wrongs at the hands of others, the question whether there is a good God who knows and cares; whether there is any righteous order of things which brings blessing to the upright in heart, very naturally forces itself upon one. With this problem of suffering the heart of men in all ages has struggled.

It is interesting and notable that in early Jewish thought a mistaken attempt to solve the problem resulted from the too unqualified acceptance of the very principle of the text. So certain were these early Hebrew thinkers that blessing would follow righteousness, that they regarded suffering, calamity, as the conclusive evidence and consequence of evil deeds. It was at this point that Job fought out the battle with his friends. Job must have been a great sinner to have suffered so sorely, was their contention. This inference he met with blank denial, and God justified him in his position.

The man of Uz found no clear, comprehensive and sufficient solution of the problem of suffering. The conclusion he reaches is that the problem is too vast and complicated for complete solution in the light of present knowledge. Even this present mundane life is too large, many-sided, kaleidoscopic for our comprehension, and this is but a part. Existence has reach beyond the present, and only in the light of the whole can we hope for the resolving of all perplexities. But at the same time, for Job as well as for our-

selves, certain truths do emerge, which throw some light upon the dark problem, and are in keeping with our analogy of the seed and its harvest.

First is the fact, well-attested, that suffering has often a disciplinary, an educational value. Too constant temporal prosperity is not always conducive to our attaining to the true light for the soul. On the contrary, when external sunshine is unbroken, it is too easy for us to be preoccupied with its glare and so to lose the vision of the light which is spiritual and eternal.

As we walk abroad under the noonday sun and gaze into the depths of the azure, we see no stars there. It is for us as if there were none. But as we descend into some shaft penetrating to the treasures that lie hid away in the earth's secret chambers, and turn to look back whence we came, the stars surprise our vision, burning at midday with calm and quenchless splendor. So, often, by sinking out of the beams of this world's brightness we sink into the fadeless radiance of the world unseen. Sorrow and disapointment have their educative value. A diamond is not polished with soap, oil or even emery stone. Only by grinding it with its own dust are its royal beauties disclosed. In no way but by fierce, fiery fermentation are the impurities cast out and the wine made rich and mellow. We too need the grinding, the crushing, the fierce agitation, if our best possibilities —that in us which is most worthy to endure— is to be brought to light.

The prophet sees God sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver. Not heartlessly does he stir the fires beneath the crucible. Carefully, tenderly he watches the molten metal, waiting for the moment when he shall be able to see his own image reflected in it; (the ideal he has for us attained); and then the flames are quenched.

In this educative effect of sorrow and trouble we may perhaps find clue also, in part at least, to the explanation of the differences of human experience. There are some who lead lives of almost unruffled prosperity. Others are the very children of calamity. And these differences are by no means to be accounted for on the basis of personal worthiness. The lives most nobly deserving are often lived under the deepest shadows.

It is true, however, that differences in personality—differences both of need and of possibility—may open the way for differences in experience. Among the multitudes of human beings there are no duplicates, either in constitutional make-up or in capability. Experiences adapted, needed, to bring out the best in one life might not have that effect upon another. The tremendous strain which is necessary to bring the racer to its perfection, would kill the dray-horse.

In the discipline of life sore trial may quite as well be the experience of large as of little worth; not because of misdeeds which call for chastisement, but because of great capabilities to be realized. Because of the very possibilities

of elect souls it may be that the discipline of suffering is appointed them. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews sees Jesus himself made perfect through suffering.

Very interesting is the fact that before the Old Testament writings were completed Jewish thought had come around to this position, which is the very opposite of that of Job's friends. To them calamity was evidence of sinfulness. To the later writers suffering was the token of divine favor. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

So interpreted the sorrows of life cast no doubt upon the outcome for the upright in heart. The harvest of light and gladness stands in no jeopardy. It simply waits upon the operation of those influences which bring it to perfection.

Essentially the same is to be said concerning another form of suffering, which is the peculiar experience of the upright in heart: that vicarious suffering, in the bearing of which Jesus far transcends all others, and which, "for the joy that was set before him" he gladly took upon himself. No man liveth to himself. Whether we will or not we are inseparably bound to one another. We rise or fall together. As by the sin of one many are made to suffer, so through the suffering of one the sorrows of the many are lightened. But for the patient burden-bearing of the great heart of Abraham Lincoln, from which his martyr death was really a release, lib-

erty could not have come to the black man or unity to a divided nation. All through our human life runs this strain of the vicarious. Through the suffering of the one blessing is made possible for the many. Few are the worthy lives that have not some share in this experience.

And suffering of this kind, however severe, casts no doubt upon the affirmation of the fact that light is sown for the righteous. It is the very means by which the harvest of light and gladness is assured. There is no joy like the joy of sacrificial service. It is the joy of the patriot that through the laying down of his own life his country may live. It is the eternal joy of our Lord. In the ultimate good of all, the upright in heart finds tenfold compensation for all the suffering on his part through which that good was secured.

In the experience of Sir Walter Scott, as Lockhart has described it, is apt illustration of what I am trying to say. In the words of the biographer, "The tragic sorrows that overwhelmed him were not the mere reversal of the wheel of fortune; but gifts from the very hand of the Father, to purify a noble soul from the dross that mingled with it; to give a great man the oportunity of living in a way that should furnish an eternal and imperishable example."

So in the disciplinary and in the vicarious aspects of the suffering of the righteous, we find what is analogous to those climatic conditions

which seem to threaten the life of the growing grain, while in reality they are making the harvest sure. They constitute no adequate solution of the whole mystery of suffering, indeed. That will be impossible until human existence is seen in its full reach. But they warrant the confident faith that as these dark aspects of life have their luminous side, so the full harvest of the upright heart, when at length it is gathered, shall prove to be light, and only light.

But far more stable than all such inferences is the ultimate basis of our confidence that for the righteous the issue is sure. Its certain ground is God. In this issue his own character is at stake. He has made us to believe that goodness shall be vindicated; that the upright in heart shall not be the object of derision. He will not fail to keep his word with us. That inner impulse, which constrains us to faithfulness, is begotten of him, the Father of our spirits; it is the offspring of that unwavering faithfulness of the Eternal, "with whom can be no variation neither shadow that is cast by turning." Fidelity to the righteous cause, faithfulness to the upright in heart is of the very essence of his being. "He cannot deny himself." In this confidence, out of the impenetrable darkness Job was able to make his affirmation, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," and ultimately to find his faith vindicated. So out of a heart wrung by many sorrows Whittier could write the words—

" Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!"

In God himself is the security that the harvest of light shall not fail the upright in heart, —the light which illumines; the light which cheers; the light of ever clearer vision; the light of ever deeper gladness. And if at any time the light delays its coming, if we wait long for it and the clouds still overhang, let there be no disheartenment. Let it be remembered, "the light is sown." Though the snows of winter be deep upon the fields where the seed has been scattered; yet the grain is there, and not far hence the springtime when this shall be manifest.

The word of the Eternal is pledged. Adversity shall not prevail. The darkness shall have an end. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning and thine health shall spring forth speedily; then shall thy light rise in darkness and thine obscurity be as the noonday." "For the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

CHAPTER VIII

EARTH HELPED THE WOMAN

CHAPTER VIII

Earth Helped the Woman

Rev. 12: 16—*And the earth helped the woman.*

IN that vision of the seer, of whose description these words are a part, there appeared a woman arrayed with the sun, the moon under her feet, upon her head a crown of stars, about to be delivered of a son; menacing her a great red dragon, intent to seize and devour the child that should be born. Away from the jaws of the dragon the new-born babe was caught up to God, and the woman fled away into the wilderness. The dragon, infuriated at the loss of his prey, poured out of his mouth a deluge of water to submerge the woman; but the earth, opening its mouth and swallowing up the river, she escaped.

"The earth helped the woman." In these words of the apocalyptic seer there is imbedded a great inspiring truth. In the vision portrayed before us we are transplanted to the realm of symbolism. In order to the apprehension of the truth embodied in the text, three symbols may perhaps call for some slight elucidation; the woman, the dragon, the earth.

Interpreted strictly, within the limits of the seer's vision, the woman symbolizes the Jewish

church, from which was born the child the Savior of the world. But the symbol is capable of far wider application than this. From the first, Christian imterpreters have seen in the woman the emblem of the church of Christ, and in her persecution the portrayal of the vicissitudes through which the Kingdom of Jesus has been called to pass. Are we not warranted in giving even wider interpretation to the figure and seeing in the woman the emblem of any organization, whatever it be, in which reside and through which operate those forces and influences whereby God is redeeming his world? Securing to the spiritual its rightful dominance in the life of our race? So broadly interpreted the woman becomes the symbol of the spiritual forces working for the redemption of the world.

The dragon represents the forces in antagonism to these. The symbol is most fitting; it is the incarnation of animalism. It typifies our legacy from "the monsters of the elder prime;" our animal inheritance. It aptly symbolizes also that satanic self-will, pride, greed, hate, which, rooted in our animal constitution, lift themselves up to antagonize and defeat the ennobling, redeeming forces of the spiritual. In that antagonism the dragon waits to devour at its birth whatever is of a nature to promote the sway of the higher life: the life with God. Thwarted in this purpose it pours forth its floods of animosity to pursue and engulf the new born higher life of man.

The earth is the emblem of nature, in its wide

scope; the total order of the universe; comprising not alone the material worlds and potencies, but man in the entire range of his constitution, together with those forces, which, working through man and society, give movement and shape to history.

So interpreting this symbolism we are able to translate the text. For the words "The earth helped the woman," we may read, "In the struggle of the spiritual with its foes, the trend of the universe is on the side of the spiritual."

This transient incident in the drama of the Apocalypse, is the proclamation of an eternal truth. Always the unchanging order of the universe promotes the spiritual. This has not been a commonly accepted, generally appreciated truth. It does not accord with the conception most prevalent in Christian circles during the post-Reformation era.

In the experience of us all the declaration of the apostle Paul has found verification: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would." This subjective experience we have translated into the affirmation of an eternal, essential dualism in the constitution of the universe. Under the influence of the Platonic philosophy we have accepted the view that the material is essentially bad; that the trend of the physical universe is antagonistic to the spiritual life; that man is normally unreligious; the spiritual life abnormal to him;—

to be implanted and established, if at all, by the irruption of some foreign power into the order of nature, to overcome it and hold it in subjection; the spiritual life an alien, to be colonized and cultivated in the mundane only by the overmastering of the normal order of the universe. This has been the too generally accepted conception.

A view somewhat less extreme which has had something of currency is, that at best the order of the physical universe is indifferent to the spiritual; that it merely affords an avenue in which the struggle between the spiritual and its antagonists may be carried on.

With the deepening sense of the immanence of God, this dualistic conception is passing. We are awakening to the realization that the universe is a unity; that it has a single ultimate end, to which, from the beginning and in all departments, everything conspires. The thought of our time is increasingly in mood to receive the intimation of the text; that the real trend of the universe, at whatever stage of its unfolding, is towards the spiritual. "The earth helps the woman." In the struggle of the spiritual with its antagonists, whether the animal or the satanic, the trend of the universe is promotive of the spiritual.

In recent years the conflict which the seer of the Apocalypse depicts has been on, with emphasis. Out of the mouth of the dragon there has poured forth a flood to overwhelm and exterminate the woman. A flood of words from

the lips of a materialistic philosophy; from atheism, arrogating to itself the name of science. A torrent of literature; the emanation from "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life," gifted with all beauty of expression and the fascination of dramatic power, but too largely sensual, skeptical, scornful. And supplementing these there has poured in upon our time a flood of corruption through the medium of an art, whose voluptuous beauty was the vehicle for bewildering, enticing appeal to the lowest. Through all these media the assault in these recent days, of the dragon upon the woman has been deadly and persistent.

For those of higher vision and pure heart, the days have been days of solicitude. That solicitude is by no means wholly past; but to all those who have the higher good of the world at heart there are being uttered messages of comfort and confidence. The word of the seer is finding verification. "The earth helped the woman."

The issue is not dubious. However fierce may be the assaults of evil, they shall not be finally successful. The eternal trend of the universe makes the outcome sure. From various quarters confirmation of this truth is transpiring in this day: from that which is coming to light concerning the constitution of the material universe; from the moral trend manifest in the order of things; from the constitutional needs and tendencies of the human spirit; from the movement of history.

First, the study of the material world, the investigation of the ultimate constitution of the physical universe, is affording evidence that by nature, "the earth helps the woman." Through the deeper understanding of the realm of matter and force there is emerging confirmation of the reality and preëminence of the spiritual. A significant change from conditions of the recent past. A quarter of a century since it was loudly proclaimed that in the material universe there was involved the negation of the spiritual. "Kraft und Stoff"—force and matter were all; adequate to account for all; the denial and exclusion of any other possibility.

But, pushing their investigations further into the material, the physicists have seemed to come through upon another side, upon which it seems to be strongly suggested that the bases of the material itself must be sought in the spiritual. In ultimate analysis, force, energy can be accounted for only as of spiritual origin; it is the expression of a will. Matter finds explanation as a form of force; so that in origin it, too, is spiritual.

Furthermore, in a degree wholly unprecedented, undreamed of, the forces of the physical universe are yielding themselves as the willing instruments of the spiritual in man. Heat, light, gravity, electricity, reveal themselves as strangely adapted to do man's bidding; and in the rendering of this service to promote his larger, richer attainment in the life of the spirit. So in origin, in use, in end, the physical uni-

verse is finding its interpretation in the spiritual. Only by reference to the spiritual is it able to give account of itself.

Advancing now a step,—in the story of the ascent of life, we find proclamation that the trend of the universe is toward the spiritual. The evolution of the forms of life has been not mere change, but progress; movement from lower to higher. In all this upward movement, moreover, there is suggested and impressed the conception of prearrangement; of operation according to plan. At the beginning and through all the ascending stages of development there is indication of superintending intelligence.

Furthermore in this upward movement, even within the ranges of what we call the animal world, there is involved the ever larger and larger inclusion of the spiritual. There is constantly increasing emergence of the elements of the spiritual, in the successive forms of life, the ant, the bee, the bird, till in the higher orders of the animal creation, like the horse and dog, we find traces of an intelligence and a moral sense worthy to be spoken of as akin to those of man. The whole trend of evolution is to the steadily increasing inclusion and expression of the spiritual in the realm of life.

The efficient causes of the material universe are spiritual. These alone can account for it. The final cause of the material universe, the end for which it exists, is spiritual: *viz.*, the bringing into existence of spiritual beings, and the providing for them of an arena for their higher and

higher development. Before the mind of one who thoughtfully observes the movement of the outer world there rises the vision of a great cycle, in which is epitomized the story of the universe. From the spiritual, God, the universe has proceeded. In the successive forms of life media have been provided for the ever fuller expression of the spiritual, until at length in the spirit of man the spirit of God is truly imaged, and in the aspirations of the devout soul the spirit returns unto God its source.

A little since, the constitution of the material universe was loudly heralded as the denial of God and of all things spiritual. Today such titles as "Through Nature to God;" "Through Science to Faith," are index of the real movement. In contrast with that boast of the spirit of denial hear these recent words of Sir Oliver Lodge, one of England's most eminent scientists: "We are coming to recognize that * * the extensive foundation of truth now being laid by scientific workers will ultimately support a gorgeous building of æsthetic feeling and religious faith." Increasingly and with marked rapidity the truth is emerging that only by reference to the spiritual can the physical universe give account of itself, either as regards origin or end. The very earth is constituted to help, does help the woman.

Second, in the conspicuously moral character of the order of the universe, its promotion of moral ends, the earth helps the woman. The trend of the nature of things is to foster and

conserve the moral, and to eliminate the non-moral.

In the succession of the forms of life, not only have higher and yet higher orders of intelligence appeared. Accompanying this evolution there has been the more and more positive exhibition of those traits which constitute the admirable in character. Altogether embryonic, if you please, even in the highest orders of the animal world, has been this foreshadowing of what was to be noble character in man. Yet the trend of nature, even among these lower orders, has been to subordinate the individualistic to the communal, the selfish to the altruistic—as in the life of ant and bee. And at length in that evolution of "the mother," which Henry Drummond has so exquisitely sketched, the order of the universe has made unambiguous affirmation of what has been its intent from the first.

Even on those planes of life, which antedate and are of lower level than human history, the manifest trend of the universe is to promote the moral and to subordinate the non-moral.

Within the range of human history, nothing is more familiar, nothing more indisputable than that by the very constitution of things, evil is short lived; that it carries the seeds of its extermination within itself. Never was it more manifest than today, that "he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death;" that, "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, even to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." So true is it that even on

what we may call its lower levels, in the region of the impersonal, the normal trend of the universe is to foster that which is spiritual.

Third, we find equal assurance of this truth when we turn our attention to the constitution of the human spirit. For it, too, is included in the order of the universe. Nothing is more firmly established than that man is inveterately, ineradicably religious. The deepest craving of his being is his insatiable hunger for God. Whether consciously or unconsciously—the deepest cry of every human spirit is, "O! that I knew where I might find him." Though he be but "an infant crying in the night, an infant crying for the light and with no language but a cry;" though he know as little as the infant what his real need is, the need of the infant is its mother, and the need of the man is God.

Again, no fact concerning man is more indisputable than that it is in finding God, man finds himself; comes to his best in intellect, in his affectional nature; in purpose and character; in the rounded worth and richness of his life. For this he was made. In this the order of the universe as it is expressed through him attains its end.

Of the same intent are those manifold influences which impinge upon the spirit of man and move it towards God, its end. The rising before us of those ideals of beauty and worth which come to us we know not whence; the welling up, from the unplumbed depths of our souls, of those divine impulsions which set us upon the

pursuit of the high and noble; the spur of our moral nature as it rings through our souls its imperative "ought;" all these are the most familiar facts of our experience. And from the outer world, from

> "the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky,"

strange mystic voices are borne in upon our souls, the call of the deep without to the deep within, summoning us to find our life in God.

So most mightily through the constitution of our spirits the great order of God's universe helps the woman.

Fourth, yet once again in the great ground swell which gives movement and direction to human history, "the earth helps the woman;" the order of the universe promotes spiritual ends. The trend of the ages has been steadily upward. As in the early stages of the world's existence, previous to man, there was steady ascent among the forms of life, till the spiritual came to its birth in man, the image of God; so since that time, on the plane of human history there has been untiring progress toward the securing of the larger prevalence and the supremacy of the spiritual in the life of the world. That is the story of the historic ages, *upward.*

Not without seeming recedence of the tide at times, as the floods of the unillumined have poured their blackness over regions where the light was shining; yet in the sequel the re-

cedence has been seen to be only seeming. Through the darkness has broken the light with a greater brilliancy and a wider dispersion.

The trend of history is upward to the ever increasing extension and to the enthronement of the spiritual in the life of the world. Continually the movement of the world's life is carrying us far beyond the intent of the actors in affairs. Men, nations, pursue their little, selfish aims; God uses them for the accomplishment of his great ends. We polish our fragments of stone. He builds them into his great mosaic.

Was it a grasping, unscrupulous imperialism, as some conceived, which placed us in the Philippines? or, as others believed, was it the result of the unselfish desire to share with others the benefits of our civilization that the United States unexpectedly found itself a most potent influence in the movements of the far East? Whichever it was, to the amazement of us all, this relation of the United States to world politics suddenly came into existence; with the significant result that the conspicuous humanizing influence in the bitter contentions of eastern Asia is American diplomacy.

Among all the signal movements of our time, what is more notable than the awakening of the social consciousness and the mighty trend toward mutualism,—the subordination of the individual to the common good; the incorporation of the spirit of Jesus in the social and industrial life of the world? A movement fitly characterized as "glacial" in the resistlessness of

its onward push; as cosmic in consideration of the forces by which it is impelled. Underneath and behind it is revealed a purpose far more mighty than human intent; it moves on with an energy vastly transcending the strength of men individually or in the multitude. Like that mighty tidal impulse which drove the deluge of the barbarians over the boundaries of north-eastern Asia and across the plains of Europe, men conspire with it in pursuit of their own advantage, or attempt to resist it in defence of threatened prerogative; but with the steady trend of the forces which are elemental it moves majestically on, till the prophecy of its absolute triumph in the betterment of human conditions and of its universal sway in the relations of society ceases to be prediction, and becomes simply the reading of the future in the light of forces already operative.

Very notably the trend of current events is to the reaffirmation, with a positiveness hitherto unknown, of the truth of Providential control in human history. Not the Providence which consists in the occasional irruption of powers outside the order of the universe for the correction or emendation of the natural and the encouragement of the spiritual; but a Providence which is the persistent unflagging energizing in and through the order of the universe, to the attainment of ever more highly moral and spiritual results; the establishment of the kingdom of heaven.

So, not only through the conscious coopera-

tion of men, but often far beyond such intended action, the forces at the heart of human history are helping the woman. The trend of the universe is to the enthronement of the spiritual.

What, now, in relation to the Gospel we proclaim, does all this signify? What but this: that Christ the divine man, is the goal of history. It is he to whom all tends from the beginning. Jesus is the true expression of the order of the universe at its culminating point. He is what it has meant from the first.

In the birth of the child for which the dragon waited, it was not alone the woman who was in labor. The earth also shared those travail pains. Is not this the declaration of the Apostle, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," * * * "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God?" Christ, then, is not some heavenly interloper; an alien life injected into the normal order of the world's history. He is the efflorescence of that history, its essential meaning at its culmination. For his production the order of the universe came into being; for the incarnation of the spirit of heaven in the life of the world.

And this not in a single isolated instance, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is the first-born among many brethren; type of that true redeemed manhood that is to be, when, through the travail of the universe, there shall be at last the perfect manifestation of the sons of God.

In and through Jesus, our Lord, the essential

efficiency and movement of the universe, from the beginning find interpretation and expression. In him that movement finds its adequate, ultimate leverage for the full attainment of its final aim—a humanity brought to its full possibilities in the glad dedication of itself to God.

But in the age-long conflict with the evil, in the toil and struggle for the furtherance of the good; in the backward rush of the tide, which from time to time recurs, does the question force itself upon us—Ah! but what of the dragon? Is not he very real, and is not he too within the order of the universe? So indeed. But only as an incident; a passing phase in the transition from the lower to the higher; an aspect of that vanity to which the creation has been subjected by its author in hope of the deliverance into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, which surely awaits:—a deliverance to be wrought by the elimination of the dragon, through the operation of those forces which, from the first, have been energizing at the heart of the universe; with the end that God shall be all, and in all.

Here, then, is for us the word of inspiration. Ever "the earth helps the woman." From the day when the mountains were brought forth to the hour when a child was born at Bethlehem; and on from the song of the herald angels to that day when every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea shall mingle their voices in that

new song of redemption consummated, from the Alpha to the Omega, from the beginning to the ending, the push of the order of the universe is to the promotion of spiritual ends.

In the midst of this great onmoving order we, the disciples of Jesus, are set. It is our high responsibility, our great glory, to be consciously cooperating with him, for the promotion of the ends of righteousness and love; for the consummation of a redeemed world.

To us comes the inspiring assurance. In the prosecution of our high calling the universe is with us, not against us. The trend of the order of things is not antagonistic; it is not indifferent. It is our positive ally. That Infinite, Eternal Energy in whose presence we are, whatever the field of its operation, is on our side; upbearing, promoting the spiritual; eliminating the opposite; bringing most unpromising seed to abundant harvest. To us, thrilled by this vision, there comes ringing that trumpet call of the great apostle:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain, in the Lord."

CHAPTER IX

FEAR NOT

CHAPTER IX

Fear Not

Luke 2: 10—*And the angel said unto them, Fear not.*

OF all the ills that mortals know, what is more distressing to the heart, what is more deforming, degrading to life than fear, that terror dread which blanches the cheek, drives the blood back upon the heart, sets the limbs to trembling, paralyzes effort; fills the soul with gloomy foreboding? And of all ills what more commonly experienced than this? Who has not known it? Who needs to be told of the misery of fear?

In all the past of mankind, scarcely any experience has been more universal and persistent. Like a black cloud it has over-hung the life of the world, casting its dark shadow over all things, transforming otherwise brightest prospects into the gloom of night.

Manifold have been the objects of dread, from manifold quarters assailing the spirit of man. Foremost among sources of apprehension has been men's thought of deity, the Unseen Power. In their endeavor to conceive the nature, the character of the source of our being, that tremendous force which energizes in the ongoing of the universe, expressing itself in tempest and

thunderbolt, as well as in the gentle zephyr and the mellow sunlight; shaking the earth with convulsions, hurling it along its orbit, wheeling the stars upon their courses, ushering men into existence, holding them in its grasp, buffeting them with the blows of fortune, snuffing them out like candles. In their endeavor to conceive this awful energy, dread superstitions have seized upon their souls. They have pictured to themselves the Eternal in whom we live, as a being of ferocity, cruel, inhuman, indifferent to the troubles and sufferings of men, if not vindictive, delighting in torture; and the dread of this awful Somewhat has filled their lives with gloom. By all conceivable means they have endeavored to placate this being, and to avert his fury,—by the offering of their possessions, by the torturing of their bodies; by the sacrificing of their children. Far and wide over the world today are scattered the witnesses of this terror of the deity, in the sacred places which have been drenched in blood; the altars that have smoked with human sacrifice.

Added to this dread of the Supreme, has been the fear of other supernatural beings, demons of the unseen, devils who inhabit the dark; the foes of men, delighting in their misery, with power to rob them of what is precious, and to bring upon them fell disaster.

Little as we may know of this in our own experience, there are vast multitudes of people in the world who live constantly under the black

shadow of this fear of supernatural foes. And even among those who are free from all such superstitious dread, how many there are whose lives are darkened by fear of the forces in the midst of which we live. How many there are on the Pacific coast whose minds are never free from the apprehension of earthquakes. How many in the middle west who can never see a dark cloud in the sky without the heart's sinking and the cheek's turning pale, through dread of the cyclone or the thunderbolt. How many, east, west, north and south, who are continually haunted by fear of miasma and contagion. To what multitudes the clear light of science has brought only darkness and foreboding by its revelation of the existence of microbes and their possibilities.

And reference to these trembling souls suggests the significant fact that the increase of knowledge, the diffusion of intelligence, does not of itself bring diminution of fear; for one of its conspicuous results is to make us aware of causes of apprehension before unknown. And above and beyond all other occasions for fear stands the spectre waiting with the key: the death from which there is no escape, and that after death fraught with the greatest of all foreboding, the dread of the unknown and unimaginable.

Who of mortals is there who has not felt the icy hand of fear, from some quarter, clutching at his heart and turning the springtime of joy into the winter of forebodings? And the effects

of fear are no less to be deplored that its sway is extended.

There is not alone the inexpressible misery of haunting apprehension, calamity enough in itself; there is also the physical wretchedness of paralyzed and disordered functions, and of the diseases which this induces, and still further, beyond all other sources of evil, fear possesses the power to rob the soul of those qualities which characterize independent and noble manhood. It turns the brave man into a coward, the generous into a beast of prey; it palsies the soul of honor and transforms the truthful into a liar. Under its baleful influence the man of integrity and high principle becomes the time-serving sycophant. It brutalizes the tender-hearted. No wild beast was ever so inhuman as the kindliest of men or of women seized by the panic of a shipwreck or of a burning building. At the baneful touch of fear all that is noblest in man shrivels and dies. Aptly has the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews described the victims of fear as all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Into this wide-spread condition of wretchedness and little-worth the voice of Christmas speaks its cheering, ennobling, liberating word, "Fear not." "Fear not."

And why fear not, does anyone ask? Because Christmas brings to us the good news of God. That is the central significance of Christmas. God is not to be dreaded. God is to be loved and trusted. In that little babe at Beth-

lehem he speaks his word of love and of assurance to the world. In the life of that little babe now come to manhood; in his words of gentleness and truth, his deeds of kindness, his tender compassion, the heart of that Eternal One in whom we live unveils itself. God is not to be dreaded, but loved and trusted, and through that loving trust in the Eternal Goodness which men shall learn to exercise, all fear—all fear, from whatever source—shall be dissipated, forever blotted out.

But is it asked, Are we not to fear God? Is not the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? Are we not told that to fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man? Even so we are. Such are the words of the preacher in Ecclesiastes. But there is no greater source of misapprehension than the ambiguity of words. That fear of God which psalmist and wise men exhort us to cultivate, is not terror; it is loving reverence, filial loyalty, worshipful obedience,—at the farthest remove from paralyzing, degrading fear, the fear of dread apprehension, the fear that is afraid. The deeper that fear of God of which the psalmist speaks, the less there will be of terror, the more of trustful peace, until it will eventuate in the perfect love, in which all fear is cast out.

As terror of God gives place to trust in God, all other terror passes. No fear of unseen foes, physical or spiritual, remains; for there are no such foes that are not under the power of the Infinite Goodness; they can work no effect upon

us in contravention of his permission; and if God be for us who can be against us? For those who in firm faith have accepted the Christmas tidings of a loving God, and are lovingly in accord with him, all fear of disaster, of untoward circumstance has passed away.

In the glad assurance that, "neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate them from the love of God," they are sure that no real evil can befall them; that dark things as well as bright have precious significance; that painful as well as pleasant experience promotes the great, blessed, abiding values; that all things do indeed work together for good to them that love God; that all possible vicissitudes which can by any means beset our pathway through life shall be factors of value in the cultivation of that high personal development which is the purpose of divine Goodness for us.

> "Be it good or ill; be it what you will,
> It needs must help me on my road,—
> My rugged way to heaven, please God.
>
> The storm but hurries us where we would be;
> Beyond the driving winds and raging sea."

This is no figment of the imagination; no superstitious fancy. It is the actual, tested by experience a million times repeated. They who have accepted the Christmas tidings of a loving Author and Ruler of the universe, and have dared to live as if those tidings were true, have found that the exhortation of the herald angel

Fear Not

"Fear not," is fully warranted. The soul courageous in God has faced the ominous emergency thick-set with suspected enemies, to discover, like Christian at the approach to the palace Beautiful, that the lions were chained. Or if seeming calamity has befallen, it has been only to reveal itself in another aspect; and the troubles, the sufferings, the losses of life have proven to be among its most valuable assets. The experience of life has warranted the confident words of Whittier—

> "We have no fear of any shape
> Which darkness may assume or fill."

And with all other fear which the Christmas tidings have banished, has gone the fear of death and of anything which may lie beyond death. For whatsoever direction into the undiscovered country our unending pilgrimage may take, it is certain we shall reach no point at which we shall fail to find the encompassing love of God already in advance of us.

> "And so beside the Silent Sea
> I wait the muffled oar;
> No harm from him can come to me
> On ocean or on shore.
>
> I know not where his islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond his love and care."

And the angel said unto them, "Fear not."

If this banishment of fear from the hearts of men were the one, sole gift of Christmas to the world, what words could over-state its worth?

In the tranquil mind, itself, the spirit free from perturbation and dread, what a treasure one possesses; to be able in quiet confidence to take upon one's lips those words of the psalmist: "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; for thou Lord alone makest me dwell in safety."

And a restful heart is but the first of the blessings which come to us through deliverance from fear. Body and mind are intimately linked. Upon peace of mind, physical well-being is closely dependent. A trustful soul is the best of all safe-guards against the assaults of disease; and the fact which present-day therapeutics is emphasizing above all others is, that in many cases the first step towards the removal of sickness from the body is the banishment of apprehension from the mind. Hope is the mother of health.

And who can estimate the possibilities in the realm of character which have been set within the reach of us men by the Christmas tidings and the Christmas gift? As fear in the heart of men has been supplanted by confident reliance on God, cowardice has given place to courage; the timid poltroon of yesterday has become the intrepid champion of today. In place of the Peter cowering before the charge of a servant maid, has stood the Peter undaunted in the presence of chief priests and rulers.

With the banishment of fear the timorous opportunist becomes the man of boldly independent mind. Falsehood, the refuge of the faint-

hearted, is abandoned for fearless fidelity to truth.

With the departure of brutalizing terror, that human sympathy, of which no heart is altogether destitute, finds opportunity to express itself; the unfeeling, unreasoning ferocity of the panic-stricken gives place to the generous compassion, which gladly accepts suffering that others need not suffer, and we have the dying Sir Philip Sydney giving his last draught of water to the wounded soldier at his side, with the words "Thy need is greater than mine."

To banish fear from the hearts of men is to open the way for all things noble. There is nothing we can do more efficacious to lighten the burden of troubled hearts or to elevate and ennoble human intercourse than to join the herald angel in his enterprise of expelling fear from the life of the world. We may do this in measure by uniting with present-day philanthropy in its endeavor to remove those conditions which foster fear and to promote others of opposite effect: sanitary conditions which shall mitigate the fear of disease; social, industrial, economic conditions which shall serve to dissipate the haunting fear of want; Government conditions which shall deliver from the fear of injustice and oppression.

There is little doubt that much may be accomplished in this direction to relieve the deplorable aspects of society and to give larger play to the nobler human sentiments and tendencies. But at the same time, we do well not

to be misled by the notion that any improvement of conditions, however notable, will ever be able to deliver the human spirit from the baleful sway of fear. For in this world of ours no combination of conditions, however favorable, can ever provide security against disaster. Human life, human fortune, are, will always be precarious.

The confidence which is based on conditions however favorable, will always find occasion for solicitude. The well-to-do as well as the poor are haunted by fear of loss and want. Apicius, a Roman aristocrat, committed suicide to avoid starvation, though he left a fortune of half a million dollars. It is only the confidence which is independent of external conditions which can give undisturbed serenity to the spirit of man; and that confidence is to be found nowhere save in the Christmas tidings: the good news of God. For the certain end of all things mundane is decay and death.

If we would have any large part with the herald angel in banishing fear from the world, we must find the ground of cheer to which we point men where he found it: in the loving care of the Eternal.

And so let us take to our souls the glad tidings of the Christmas time, and say to men with confidence which shall carry conviction, "Fear not. Fear not. For Christ has lived. God is, and God is love."

But have we seen the truth on all its sides? Has not a foremost educator of our time de-

clared that the most important element in education is teaching the young what to fear? Is there nothing, then, of which to be afraid?

There is indeed one thing: the thing which we call evil, sin; the rejection of the voice of duty; the one thing which puts us beyond God's ability to help; the thing which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Ah yes; be afraid of evil. We cannot fear it too much. But of whatsoever else, let us hear once more the inspiring word of the herald angel: Fear not. Trust God, nor be afraid.

CHAPTER X

THE SECRET OF CONTENT

CHAPTER X

The Secret of Content

Phil. 4: 11-12—*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret, both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.*

IN order that these words of St. Paul may come to us with their legitimate force, we need to remember that they were written in a Roman prison. We need to hear, as the apostle wrote, the clank of the chain upon his wrist, which bound him to his Roman guard. We need to recall the privations he had suffered during his imprisonment, which now had been relieved by the gifts of these Christians at Philippi, and also the malicious diligence of the busybodies outside the prison in their endeavor to raise up affliction for him in his bonds.

Having this picture of the apostle's condition in mind, we shall be able better to appreciate the significance of his words, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." A lesson this, worth learning, surely: in all the vicissitudes of this checkered life to be of tranquil mind, cheerful, content.

It means much, too, that these are the words of no mere ascetic; of one who knew nothing

of the worth of the world's good things because of never having possessed them, or of one who lacked the ability to enjoy them when possessed. Paul knew what it was to abound. Few have larger enjoyment of the objects of the world's ambition than he had known as a young man; few are better qualified by nature and education to appreciate them at their true worth. It is one fully qualified to enjoy the comforts and gladnesses of life, one keenly sensitive to its sorrows, sufferings and privations, who yet affirms his discovery of the secret of great content, regardless of the circumstances in which he may be placed.

Is it not worth our while to inquire what is the key to this enviable state of mind, and to ask whether it be available for ourselves?

If we note a very slight change in the translation of this verse as it occurs in the Revised Version, we may receive a suggestion as to the direction, at least, in which the secret of St. Paul's contentment is to be sought. The Common Version reads, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." The Revised Version has it, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content." The change from "therewith" to "therein," what does it suggest? That the secret of Paul's content was not the state itself in which he might be; it was not to be sought in the elements of the existing situation, but in something altogether apart from these. He was not contented with the situation; he was contented in

the situation because the ground of his contentment was something altogether outside of it; something of so great and satisfying worth that in comparison with it the discomforts of a Roman dungeon seemed unworthy of consideration.

We know how human love has power to work this great content and to transform privation, toil and hardship into trifles. Allan Cunningham sings,

> "Tho the wee wee cot maun be my bield,
> And my claething e'er sae mean,
> I wad lap me up rich in the fauds o' love,
> Heaven's armfu' o' my Jean."

The young bride forsakes home, friends, luxury, to share with her lover the hardship and privation of the frontier. The humble cabin knows little of comfort and nothing of elegance; but love lights it. Life within it is not mere endurance, it is joy. Hard toil, pinching economy are trifles. Irradiated by love they possess a charm which the affluence of the palace cannot rival. And if later days bring a more luxurious home, it is not the luxury which constitutes its gladness. Still love is the source and secret of content. In default of it the most elegant surroundings would be but glittering wretchedness.

So the apostle Paul had found something altogether apart from the mere circumstances of his lot which could fill with content any situation; even that in which the companionship of human love itself was wanting; a secret which could transform the lonely prison cell into the

place of triumphant song. What was this secret?

We shall find answer in the words of the apostle in another letter to other friends: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Paul's eyes had been opened to a great realm of the unseen, enveloping these things of the tangible; a realm of so great breadth and meaning that these material, visible things, the comforts or discomforts of this mundane life, appeared relatively insignificant. In that realm of the unseen, not in this of the visible, are the true values. In comparison with those, these were worthy of little consideration. And such significance as these things of the present do possess, whether pleasing or painful, they derive not from themselves but from their relation to that great unseen world-order, in which they are included. Their real import is apprehended only when they are seen in their relation to it.

The vicissitudes of individual experience have meaning because of issues which follow from them in that invisible realm. In that realm the inscrutable puzzles of life find their solution. Hence, any transient pains, discomforts, sufferings, can be accepted with content,

because of the far more important things which life involves; because these themselves have outcome of real value in the realm of things which abide.

That cloud which gathers about the mountain top in the beautiful mid-summer day, that precipitation of moisture so that it can be seen, bears witness to a condition of humidity which exists all unseen in all the surrounding atmosphere.

So our present life in this world, with its incidents, pleasing or painful, is but the transient and localized coming to view of that vast, all-embracing unseen in which the solution of all puzzles is to be sought: the real abiding satisfaction is to be found. With this great vision of the real unseen, there came to the apostle:

First—rest for the intellect, the puzzling mind. One great source of our discontent is perplexity, intellectual confusion. We are discontented not so much because the things themselves which we are called to endure are so intolerable. Compared with what human fortitude is able to bear, with what we ourselves have sometimes endured, they are not worthy of mention. The real root of our discontent is that these things are inexplicable. We cannot understand why they should be; what warrant there is for them in the case of beings so susceptible to suffering; in a universe under the control of divine love. If we were able to see that the occasions of our discontent had meaning, that some great end was being served by

them, we could accept them and far more with exultation: as the soldiers of Japan, in the late war, under the inspiration of patriotism accepted with enthusiasm such suffering and sacrifice as far transcends anything we ever have experienced.

Just this dissipation of intellectual confusion the apostle Paul had experienced, through vision of the unseen. Frequently we find him speaking of the revelation of the Mystery hid from ages and generations which had been granted to him. He had caught glimpses of the great divine purpose running through the ages, including all the incidents of human experience in its sweep. From this height of vision he was able to perceive that nothing was meaningless. Everything, the dark as well as the bright, the painful as well as the pleasing, stood related to the great whole; had its contribution to make to the great and glorious consummation. In this satisfying of the perplexed mind was one great factor of content. Henceforth the painful incident of experience was not something to be merely bewailed. It was a summons to fortitude, that through its endurance the things worth being might be.

> "Then courage soul, nor hold thy strength in vain:
> In faith o'ercome the steep God sets for thee;
> For past the Alpine summit of great pain
> Lieth thine Italy."

As a second factor in his great content, Paul's vision of the unseen had brought him rest of heart. Important as is the part which satisfac-

tion of the questioning intellect contributes to quietness of soul, it is still true that we live in our affections. No amount or positiveness of knowledge can silence the discontent of a hungry heart. To this, love and love alone is adequate.

Most impressively it had been borne in upon the apostle that the great unseen which enveloped him was not uninhabited. On the contrary, it was more than anything else the dwelling place of a great personality. Into the apostle's life that personality had made way for himself with a power which was irresistible, and an authority which admitted no question.

Conspicuous above all other incidents in the history of St. Paul had been that experience on the way to Damascus, when an unseen person had laid hold of him, mastered him, lifted him up and started him on his great career. From that day on, this unseen friend had been a constant presence in his life; revealing a heart of infinite friendliness, guiding the apostle, sustaining him, giving direction and effect to all his activity. In the fellowship of this divine friend Paul had found comfort, the satisfaction and inspiration of a hungry heart. This unseen companionship had brought him quickening of his intellect, strengthening of purpose, sustainment in all great achievement. This friendship of the unseen Christ had come to be more precious to him than all things else. For it he could gladly suffer the loss of all things. In it the craving of the soul for love was more than satis-

fied. It was able to do for him all and far more than dearest human love can ever do to make insignificant the painful incidents of outward circumstance. To it he pointed as the secret of his great content. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. For St. Paul the love of this divine friend had come to be the chief good of being. For him to live was Christ; to die was to depart and be with Christ, which was far better. Under the inspiration of this mighty love, this great divine friendship, the disagreeable incidents of life, toil, privation, imprisonment, became trifles unworthy of mention; the song in the heart was proof against all the chill and darkness of the Roman dungeon.

One other element in that content which was born of St. Paul's vision of the unseen was a great hope: scope for the energies of his soul. His contentment was not the resignation of the defeated, but the composure of an intense, ambitious, forceful spirit. If there was ever an electric battery in human form, it surely was the apostle Paul. He had lived a life of amazing energy and amazing results. Out to the fruits of his activity his thoughts were continually running, as the chain clanked which bound him to his Roman guard. These Philippian Christians to whom he was writing were a part of his achievement: the first-fruits of his labors on the continent of Europe. As he wrote the words "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content," he could feel again upon his back the cut of the scourge at the cost

of which he had won these Philippians to the faith and purchased for them the consideration of the local authorities. Once again his blood was stirred with the thrill of exultation as the affront to his Roman citizenship was expiated by the humble apologies of the provincial officials.

The ambition of the apostle was still with him. Nowhere do we find more emphatic expression of it than in this letter. These chapters bristle with the confidence that his past efficiency is of perpetual significance, and with expectation of possibilities of achievement which the future has in store. Paul saw his own life and work as part of a great enduring enterprise, which that unseen divine friend was prosecuting in human history; whose success was assured, and which was laden with blessing unspeakable for the children of men, here and hereafter.

To the success of that great enterprise his bonds and enforced idleness were tributary, no less than the proclamation of the good tidings and the planting of churches. In view of its glorious outcome, transient incidents of personal experience, comfortable or uncomfortable, were of trifling significance. In the inspiration of the great issue and of the possible contribution to it of his present experiences, he was full of tranquillity whatever the experiences themselves might be.

It is needless to pursue our questioning further. In these three factors we find adequate

ground for St. Paul's content: a great vision, a great divine friend, a great hope.

It is worthy of our consideration that this latter was not a transient but an eternal hope,—a hope stretching far on beyond the earthly sojourn.

It is a tendency with some in our time to seek the sole incentive for endurance and achievement in this present mundane life; and to discredit the eye and heart catching inspiration from the possibilities of the hereafter. This tendency, notwithstanding its assumption of superiority, is shallow and unperceiving. It is the mood of mind of the inexperienced and the specially favored, with little sense of the tragedy of human life. For vast multitudes, aye, for the majority of mankind, life from the mundane point of view is a failure, both as regards enjoyment and accomplishment.

If Paul had not had outlook beyond the jaws of the lion or the sword thrust of the executioner which awaited him, there would have been scant basis for his great content. Life in this world is good to make character; to fashion by its experiences, when nobly borne, those who are to be members of a blessed society in the hereafter. And that is about all that life really is good for. We believe that such a society is increasingly to be established in this world, indeed; and that to labor for it is the obligation nearest, most pressing; yet with the constant recognition that this is only in anticipation of an enduring existence in other realms.

We echo the sentiment of George Eliot:

> "O may I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence."

But if this is our only enduring existence; if the best, sole outcome of life is to contribute a modicum to the upward movement of a world, whose not distant destiny is to be snuffed out in volcanic eruption or to be frozen to death in the cold of the inter-stellar spaces, the possibility is an utterly insufficient basis for such triumphant contentment, such unconquerable optimism as that of Paul.

It is not impossible that, at times, there has been disproportionate stress upon the hereafter, whether in the way of dread or of anticipation. Other-worldliness may have been cultivated to the neglect of the present world. But the opposite extreme is quite as false and as faulty. It is indeed the powers and possibilities of the world to come which impart to the present its true value. It is the possible oak which gives significance to the acorn. The egg comes to its true interpretation only in terms of the eagle. Nothing but the vision of the eternal can save the mundane from deteriorating into the sordid, the sensual, the despairing.

A better and an eternal portion hereafter; a continuing city to come; a building, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; these are what impart undying worth to the present and clothe it with supernal value. It is the vision of the outreaching future which makes human